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COLOMBA AND CARMEN.

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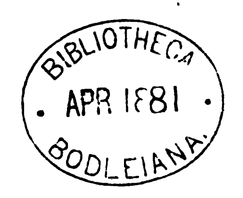
POPULAR FRENCH NOVELS.

COLOMBA

AND

CARMEN.

BY PROSPER MÉRIMÉE.



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COLOMBA.

CHAPTER I.

" Pè far la to vendetta,
Sta sigur', vasta anche ella."—*Vocero du Niolo.*

It was early in the month of October, 181— that Colonel Sir Thomas Nevil, a distinguished Irish officer, alighted with his daughter at the Hôtel Beauveau, Marseilles, on their return from a tour in Italy. The long-continued admiration of enthusiastic travellers has produced a reaction, and many tourists now seek to distinguish themselves from the common herd by adopting for their motto the *nil admirari* of Horace. Lydia Nevil, the colonel's only daughter, belonged to this class. Raffaelle's "Transfiguration" appeared to her so-so, and Vesuvius in eruption hardly superior to the chimneys of the Birmingham factories. In a word, her capital objection to Italy was that the country lacked what the French call *couleur locale*, that it had no marked character. At first Miss Nevil had flattered herself with the hope of finding things beyond the Alps which had never been noticed before, and of which she might talk "avec les honnêtes gens," as M. Jourdain says. But soon, anticipated in every direction by her compatriots, and compelled to give up her quest of the unknown in despair, she joined the ranks of the opposition. It is in truth very unpleasant not to be able to talk of the wonders of Italy, without being taken aback by some one saying to you, "Of course you know the Raffaelle, in the —— palace at ——? It is the finest thing in Italy:"—the said

Raffaelle being one of the very few things you neglected to see. As it would take too long to see everything, the simplest course is to condemn everything off-hand.

Miss Nevil encountered a bitter disappointment at the Hôtel Beauveau. She had with her a pretty sketch of the Pelasgian or Cyclopean gate of Segni, which she fancied had been overlooked by amateur artists. Now Lady Francis Fenwick, meeting her in Marseilles, invited her to look at her album, and lo! between a sonnet and a dried flower, there was the identical gate in question, elaborately portrayed in burnt sienna. Miss Nevil gave the gate of Segni to her waiting-maid, and lost all respect for Pelasgian architecture.

Colonel Nevil, who, since the death of his wife, saw things only with his daughter's eyes, shared in this sombre mood. Italy had been guilty of the monstrous offence of having wearied his daughter, and that was enough to make it in his opinion the most wearisome country on the face of the globe. He had nothing to say indeed against the pictures and the statues; but he could speak decidedly to the fact that it was a wretched sporting country. It took thirty miles tramping through the campagna of Rome in a broiling sun, to kill a few good-for-nothing red partridges.

The day after his arrival in Marseilles he fell in with Captain Ellis, his former adjutant, who had just been passing six weeks in Corsica, and he invited him to dinner. The captain narrated in very good style to Miss Nevil a bandit story, that had the merit of not bearing the least resemblance to the tales of robbers with which our travellers had been so plentifully entertained on the road from Rome to Naples. After dinner the two gentlemen talked of field-sports over their Bordeaux, and the colonel was made aware of the fact, that in no country is there finer sporting or a greater variety and abundance of game, than in Corsica.

"There are lots of wild boars," said the captain, "and, by-the-by, it is necessary to be able to distinguish them readily from

the domestic swine, which they resemble surprisingly; for if you shoot the piggies you get into a scrape with their keepers. They come out upon you from a sort of coppice which they call a 'mâquis,' armed to the teeth, make you pay for the damage you have done, and laugh in your face. Then there's the mouflon, a very singular animal found nowhere else: it affords capital sport, but is shy. There are deer, pheasants, partridges without end. If you are fond of shooting, go to Corsica, colonel; there, as one of my entertainers said, you may fire away at all sorts of game, from quails up to men."

At tea the captain again delighted Miss Nevil with a story of a "vendetta transversale,"[1] still more strange than his first tale, and he put the climax to her enthusiasm for Corsica, by describing to her the savage aspect of the country, unlike every other, the original character of the inhabitants, and their primitive manners. Lastly he presented her with a pretty little stiletto, not so remarkable for its form or its copper mounting, as for its history. A famous bandit had parted with it to Captain Ellis, warranting it to have been plunged to the hilt in four human bodies. Miss Nevil placed it in her belt, laid it on the table by her bedside, and twice drew it from the scabbard before she fell asleep. The colonel on his part dreamed that he killed a mouflon for which the owner made him pay: but he parted with his money without reluctance, for the animal was a very curious one, something like a wild boar, with the antlers of a stag and the tail of a pheasant.

"Ellis tells me there is capital sporting in Corsica," said the colonel, next morning to his daughter, at breakfast. "If it was not so far I should like to spend a fortnight there."

"Well, suppose we go to Corsica," replied Miss Nevil. "While you are amusing yourself with your gun, I shall ply my pencil. I should be delighted to have a sketch in my album of

[1] A vengeance inflicted on a relation, more or less remote, of the original offender.

the grotto Captain Ellis told us of, where Bonaparte used to go and study when a child."

This was, perhaps, the first time a whim of the colonel's had met with his daughter's decided approbation. Agreeably surprised as he was, he, nevertheless, discreetly affected to see certain objections to the scheme, in order to put more mettle into Miss Nevil's welcome caprice. It was to no purpose he talked of the rudeness of the country, and of the difficulties a lady would encounter in travelling there. She feared nothing; she was above all things fond of travelling on horseback; it would be quite a treat to her to bivouac by night; she threatened to go to Asia Minor. In short, she had an answer for every objection, for no English woman had ever been in Corsica, and to Corsica she would go. Only think of the pleasure of exhibiting her album on her return!—"What a charming drawing! why do you pass over it?"—"Oh! that's a mere nothing; a little sketch I made of a famous Corsican bandit who acted as our guide."—"What! you have been in Corsica?"

As there were in those days no steamboats between France and Corsica, our travellers inquired for a sailing vessel bound to the island Miss Nevil proposed to discover. That very day the colonel wrote to Paris, to countermand the apartments that were to have been retained for him, and made a bargain with the master of a Corsican schooner about to sail for Ajaccio. There were two cabins, such as they were. The captain swore that an old sailor of his was a prime cook, and that for toad-in-a-hole no man could surpass him. He promised that mademoiselle should find herself comfortable, and that she should have a fair wind and a smooth sea.

The colonel further stipulated, in compliance with his daughter's wishes, that the captain should not take any other passenger, and that he should shape his course so as to coast along the island, and enable the voyagers to enjoy the prospect of its mountains.

CHAPTER II.

On the morning of the day fixed for their departure, everything was packed up and on board; the schooner was to get under weigh with the evening breeze. Meanwhile the colonel was walking on the Canebière with his daughter, when the master of the little vessel came up and asked leave to take one of his relations on board (that is to say, the second cousin of his eldest son's godfather), who was returning to Corsica, his native country, on urgent business, but could not find a vessel. "He is a charming lad," said the captain of the schooner, "an officer in the foot chasseurs of the guard, and would be a colonel by this time, if *the other*, meaning Napoleon, were still emperor."

"Since he is a soldier," said the colonel, who was about to add, "let him come with us by all means"—but Miss Nevil exclaimed, in English, "An infantry officer!" (her father having been in the cavalry, she had a contempt for every other branch of the service) "some vulgar bore, perhaps, who will be sea-sick, and spoil all the pleasure of the trip."

The captain did not understand a word of English, but he seemed to guess at what Miss Nevil said, from the pouting of her pretty mouth. Accordingly he began to pronounce a panegyric upon his relation in good set terms, and wound up his harangue by averring that he was a very gentlemanly man, of a family of Corporals, and that he would not cause the colonel the least inconvenience, for he undertook to stow him away in a corner where nobody would set eyes on him.

The colonel and Miss Nevil thought it odd that there should be families of corporals in Corsica, in which the rank descended

from father to son; but as they religiously believed that the person in question was a corporal of infantry, they concluded that he was some poor devil to whom the captain wished to give a passage for charity. Had he been an officer, they would have been obliged to talk to him, to live with him; but as he was only a corporal, they had no need to put themselves out of their way on his account.

"Is your relation ever sea-sick?" inquired Miss Nevil, drily.

"Never, mademoiselle. His stomach's as sound as a block. Sea or shore, it's all one to him."

"Well, then, you may take him on board."

"You may take him on board," echoed the colonel, and they continued their walk.

About five that evening the captain waited on them to convey them to the schooner. At the water-side, standing by the ship's boat, they found a tall young man, dressed in a blue frock coat, buttoned up to the chin, with a deep brown complexion, large, keen, black eyes, and looks that bespoke frankness and intelligence. By his carriage and his small curled moustache, it was easy to recognise the soldier; for in those days moustaches were not to be seen on every face you met in the streets, and the national guard had not yet introduced into every family the costume along with the habits of the guardhouse.

The young man took off his cap when the colonel came up, and expressed his thanks appropriately and with ease for the service done him.

"Very happy to accommodate you, my lad," said the colonel, with a friendly nod, as he stepped into the boat.

"Free and easy he is, this Englishman of yours," whispered the young man to the captain in Italian. The latter laid his forefinger under his left eye, and pulled down the corners of his mouth. To one acquainted with the language of signs this was as much as to say that the Englishman understood Italian, and that he was an oddity. The young man smiled slightly,

touched his forehead, in reply to the captain's sign, as if to signify that all Englishmen had something wrong thereabouts, seated himself beside the captain, and then applied himself very attentively, but not impertinently, to scrutinize his pretty fellow-passenger.

"They have an air of good breeding about them, these French soldiers," said the colonel in English to his daughter, "and that is one reason why so many of them make good officers." Then addressing the young man in French he inquired, "What regiment have you served in, my lad?"

The person thus addressed slightly nudged the father of his second cousin's godson with his elbow, and repressing a sarcastic smile, replied that he had been in the foot chasseurs of the guard, and that he had just quitted the 7th regiment of light infantry.

"Were you at Waterloo? You are very young."

"Pardon me, colonel, it was my only campaign."

"It counts double," said the colonel. The young Corsican bit his lips.

"Papa," said Miss Nevil, in English, "ask him if the Corsicans are very fond of their Bonaparte."

Before the colonel could translate the question into French, the young man answered in tolerably good English, though with a foreign accent, "You know, mademoiselle, that no one is a prophet in his own country. We countrymen of Napoleon are perhaps less attached to him than the French. As for me, though my family was formerly at enmity with his, I love and admire him."

"You speak English," exclaimed the colonel.

"Very ill, as you may perceive."

Though a little provoked by the freedom of his manner, Miss Nevil could not help smiling at the notion of a personal enmity between a corporal and an emperor. It was like a foretaste of the whimsicalities of Corsica, and she promised herself to note it down in her journal.

"Perhaps you have been a prisoner in England?" said the colonel.

"No, colonel, I learnt English in France when very young, from a prisoner of your nation." Then addressing Miss Nevil, "The captain tells me you are just come from Italy: no doubt you speak pure Tuscan, mademoiselle; you will have some trouble, I fear, to understand our *patois*."

"My daughter understands all the Italian *patois*," said the colonel; "she has the gift of tongues, unlike me."

"Could mademoiselle make out the meaning, for example, of these lines in one of our Corsican songs? They are spoken by a shepherd to a shepherdess:

"S'entrassi 'ndru Paradisu santu, santu,
E nun truvassi a tia, mi n'esciria."[1]

Miss Nevil did understand the lines, and thinking the quotation audacious, and still more so the look that accompanied it, she reddened and replied, "*Capisco.*"

"You are going home on furlough, I suppose?" resumed the colonel.

"No, colonel. They have put me on half pay, probably because I was at Waterloo, and because I am Napoleon's countryman. I am returning home, light of hope, light of money as the song says;" and he looked upwards with a sigh.

The colonel thrust his hand in his pocket, and fumbling with a gold piece, began to think of some little speech that might serve his turn, and enable him to slip the coin politely into the hand of his unfortunate enemy. "Just the way with myself," he said, good humouredly; "they have put me on half pay too; but you must find it hard with your half pay to buy tobacco. Here, corporal—" and he strove to slip the piece of gold into the closed hand which the young man rested on the

[1] "If I entered holy, holy paradise, and did not find you there, I would quit it."—*Serenata di Zicavo.*

gunwale. The young Corsican coloured deeply, drew himself up, bit his lips, and seemed on the point of replying in anger, when all on a sudden the expression of his features changed, and he burst into a laugh. The colonel looked on, bewildered, with his coin in his hand.

"Colonel," said the young man, recovering his gravity, "permit me to give you two pieces of advice. The first is, never to offer money to a Corsican, for there are some among my countrymen who would be unmannerly enough to throw it back in your face; the other is, not to give people titles to which they do not lay claim. You call me corporal, and I am a lieutenant; no doubt the difference is not very great, but—"

"Lieutenant!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, "lieutenant! why the captain told me you were a corporal like your father and all the males of your line, before you."

At these words, the young man, fairly falling backwards, began to laugh with such hearty good will, that the captain and the two sailors could not help joining in the chorus.

"I beg your pardon, colonel," the young man said at last; "but the drollery of the thing is really irresistible. It never struck me till this moment. It is true my family boasts of numbering Corporals among its ancestors, but our Corsican Corporals never wore stripes on their sleeves. About the year 1100 some communes, having revolted against the tyranny of the mountain lords, elected chiefs whom they called Caporali. We esteem it an honour in our island to be descended from these tribunes as it were."

"I beg a thousand pardons, my dear sir!" cried the colonel. "I hope you will be so good as to excuse my mistake since you are aware of the cause." And he held out his hand.

"I am justly punished, colonel, for my small pride," the young man answered, still laughing, and cordially grasping the Englishman's hand; "I am not offended in the least. Since my friend the captain has announced me so badly, allow me to

introduce myself. My name is Orso Della Rebbia, a lieutenant on half-pay, and if, as those two handsome dogs lead me to suppose, you are going to Corsica for the sake of field sports, I shall be delighted to do the honours of our mâquis and our mountains for you—if indeed I have not forgotten them," he added with a sigh.

The boat was now just alongside the schooner. The lieutenant offered his hand to Miss Nevil, and then assisted the colonel to climb on deck. Arrived there, Sir Thomas, who was still very much abashed by his blunder, and knew not how to excuse his rudeness to a man who traced back his lineage to the year 1100, did not wait for his daughter's consent, but at once invited him to supper, with many renewed apologies and much shaking of hands. Miss Nevil frowned a little, to be sure, but after all she was not averse to learn what sort of a person a Corporal was. She rather liked their guest's appearance, and even began to discover in him something, I know not what, that looked aristocratic, only he had too frank and cheerful an air for a hero of romance.

"Lieutenant Della Rebbia," said the colonel, taking wine with him, "I saw many of your countrymen in Spain, they were excellent sharpshooters."

"Yes, many of them fell in Spain," said the young lieutenant, gravely.

"I shall never forget the conduct of a Corsican battalion at the battle of Vittoria," the colonel went on to say. "I have reason to remember them;" here he pressed his chest. "They had been all day posted as sharpshooters in the gardens and behind the hedges, and had killed I don't know how many men and horses of ours. When the retreat was at last decided on, they rallied together and set off roundly. We expected to have our revenge in the plain, but the rascals—I beg pardon—lieutenant—the brave fellows had formed in square, and there was no breaking them. In the middle of the square, I think I see

him this moment, there was an officer mounted on a little black horse. He kept close to the eagle smoking his cigar, as coolly as if he was in a café. Now and then their band struck up a flourish, by way of defying us. I sent my first two squadrons to charge them. Wheugh! instead of breaking through the front of the square, away go my dragoons right and left, then wheel round, and back they come in complete disorder, not a few horses without riders—and that infernal band going all the while! When the smoke cleared away, I saw the officer again beside the eagle smoking his cigar as before. Furious at the sight, I put myself at the head of a final charge. Their guns, foul with continual firing, would no longer go off, but the soldiers were ranged six deep, with their bayonets pointed at our horses' noses. It was absolutely like a wall. I shouted and cheered on my men, and clapped spurs to my horse to press him forwards, when the officer quietly took his cigar from his mouth and pointed me out to one of his men. I heard something like, *Al capello bianco!* I had a white plume. I heard nothing more, for a ball went through my chest. It was a fine battalion, M. Della Rebbia, that same first battalion of the 18th, all Corsicans, as I was told afterwards."

"Ay," said Orso, whose eyes sparkled at this narrative, "they covered the retreat and brought off their eagle; but two-thirds of those brave fellows are now sleeping on the plains of Vittoria."

"By-the-by, perhaps you can tell me the name of the officer who commanded them?"

"It was my father. He was then major of the 18th, and was made colonel for his conduct on that disastrous day."

"Your father! A brave man, a very brave man, upon my soul! I should be very glad to see him: I am certain I should know him. Is he still living?"

"No, colonel," said the young man, turning somewhat pale.

"Was he at Waterloo?"

"He was; but he had not the good fortune to fall on a field of battle. He died in Corsica—two years ago.—What a beautiful sea! It is ten years since I saw the Mediterranean. Do you not think the Mediterranean more beautiful than the ocean, mademoiselle?"

"I think it too blue—its waves want grandeur."

"You are fond of wild beauty, mademoiselle? If so, I think you will be pleased with Corsica."

"My daughter is fond of everything that is extraordinary," said the colonel; "that is the reason why she did not like Italy."

"I know nothing of Italy," said Orso, "except Pisa, where I passed some time at college, but I cannot think without admiration of the Campo Santo, the Duomo, the leaning Tower, but above all the Campo Santo. You remember the picture of "Death" by Orcagna. I fancy I could draw it, so strongly is it impressed on my memory."

Miss Nevil was apprehensive that the lieutenant was about to launch out into a tirade of enthusiasm. "It is very fine," she said, suppressing a yawn. "Excuse me, papa, my head aches; I will go down to my cabin." So saying, she kissed her father's forehead, bent her head majestically to Orso, and disappeared.

The two gentlemen then conversed about sporting and military matters. They found out that they had been face to face at Waterloo, and that they must have exchanged many balls. This put them upon all the better terms with each other. They criticised by turns Napoleon, Wellington, and Blucher; then they hunted together the deer, the boar, and the mouflon. At last, the night being far advanced, and the last bottle of Bordeaux finished, the colonel once more shook hands with the lieutenant, and wished him good night, expressing his hope to cultivate an acquaintance begun in so ludicrous a manner. They separated and each went to bed.

CHAPTER III.

The night was fine, the moon played upon the waves, the vessel glided smoothly before the gentle breeze. Miss Nevil felt no inclination to sleep, and it was only the presence of a profane one that had hindered her from enjoying those emotions, with which the clear moonlight and the open sea inspire every human being who has two grains of poetic feeling in his heart. When she judged that the young lieutenant was fast asleep like a prosaic being as he was, she rose, wrapped herself in a mantle, awoke her waiting-maid, and ascended to the deck. There was no one there but the sailor at the helm, who was singing a sort of lament in the Corsican dialect to a rude and monotonous air. In the stillness of the night the strange music had its charm. Unfortunately, Miss Nevil did not perfectly understand what the sailor was singing. Amidst a great deal that was commonplace, an energetic line now and then vividly excited her curiosity; but just at the critical point there would come in some words of *patois* the meaning of which she could not guess. She could make out, however, that the subject of the ditty was an assassination. Imprecations against the assassins, threats of vengeance, and eulogiums on the deceased were all mixed up together. Some few lines of which she caught the import ran thus:—

'Twas from behind the cowards struck who quailed before his glance,
They never faced him as he faced full oft the foes of France.

. . . .

My well-won cross of honour place before my dark'ning eye;
It's ribbon's red, my gory shirt is stained a deeper dye.

And when my son, now far away, shall seek his home once more,
Give him his murder'd father's cross, this shirt stiff with his gore.

. . . .

And vengeance claims, and, doubt ye not, will have its amplest meed,
The hand that shot, the eye that aimed, the heart that planned the deed.

Here the sailor suddenly broke off. "Why do you not go on with your song, my good man?" said Miss Nevil.

The sailor, with a jerk of his head, drew her attention to a figure just issuing from the shade of the mainsail. It was Orso, who had come on deck to enjoy the beauties of the night.

"Do go on with your lament," said Miss Nevil, "I was very much pleased with it."

The sailor bent towards her, and said in a very low whisper, "I never give any one the 'rimbecco.'"

"The what?"

The sailor made no answer, but began to whistle.

"I find you admiring our Mediterranean, Miss Nevil," said Orso, approaching her. "You will admit that such a moon is nowhere else to be seen."

"I was not looking at it. I was very busy studying Corsican. This sailor, who has been singing a most tragical lament, has just stopped short at the most interesting point."

The sailor, stooping down as if to look more closely at the compass, plucked Miss Nevil roughly by the mantle. It was evident that the lament could not be sung before Lieutenant Orso.

"What were you singing, Paolo Francè?" said Orso; "was it a 'ballata,' or a 'vocero?'[1] Mademoiselle understands you, and would be glad to hear you out to the end."

[1] When a man dies, particularly when he has been assassinated, they lay his corpse on a table, and the women or female friends of the family, or if need be, other women noted for their poetical powers, deliver extemporaneous dirges, in the Corsican dialect, in presence of a numerous audience. The reader, familiar with the customs of the Irish people, will at once remember a parallel for this in the practice of *keening*, and

"I have forgotten it, Ors' Anton'," said the sailor; and forthwith he began to roar out a hymn to the Virgin. Miss Nevil listened to the hymn with indifference, and did not press the singer any more, at the same time determining that she would positively unriddle this mystery by-and-by. But her maid, who was from Florence, and understood the Corsican dialect no better than her mistress, was equally desirous of information. Addressing Orso, therefore, before her mistress could interfere with a warning sign, "Monsieur le capitaine," she said, "what is the meaning of giving the 'rimbecco?'"

"The 'rimbecco!' Why it is to put the most deadly insult upon a Corsican, to reproach him with not having revenged himself. Who talked to you of the 'rimbecco!'"

"It was yesterday, at Marseilles," said Miss Nevil, hastily interposing, "the captain of the schooner made use of the word."

"Of whom was he speaking?" asked Orso, eagerly.

"Oh! he was telling us an old story—of the time of—I think it was about Vannina d'Ornano."

"The death of Vannina, I suppose, mademoiselle, does not inspire you with much esteem for our hero, the brave Sampiero?"

"Do you really think the deed was very heroic?"

"The savage manners of the times may be pleaded in excuse of his crime; besides, Sampiero was waging a war of life or death against the Genoese: what confidence could his countrymen have had in him, if he had not punished her who was endeavouring to treat with the enemy?"

"Vannina," said the sailor, "had gone away without her

the women called *keeners*, who are sometimes relations of the deceased; but who, not unfrequently, give their services in a professional capacity. In Corsica, these women are called *voceratrici*, or, according to the Corsican pronunciation, *buceratrici;* and the lament is called *vocero*, *buceru*, *buceratu*, on the eastern side of the island, *ballata* on the western.

husband's permission: Sampiero served her right to wring her neck."

"But," said Miss Nevil, "it was to save her husband—it was from love for him—she went to ask pardon for him from the Genoese."

"Ask pardon for him! That was disgracing him!" exclaimed Orso.

"And to kill her with his own hand!" continued Miss Nevil. "What a monster he must have been!"

"You know that she entreated this as a favour. Do you look upon Othello, too, as a monster, mademoiselle?"

"That is a very different case. He was jealous; Sampiero was only impelled by vanity."

"And what is jealousy but vanity—the vanity of love? Perhaps you excuse it in consideration of the motive?"

Miss Nevil gave him a look of great dignity, and turning to the sailor, she asked him when the schooner would arrive in port.

"The day after to-morrow, if the wind holds," was the reply.

"I shall be very glad to get sight of Ajaccio, for I am quite tired of this vessel." She rose, took her maid's arm, and moved a few steps along the deck. Orso stood motionless near the helm, uncertain whether he should accompany her in her walk, or drop a conversation which seemed to annoy her.

"Blood of the Madonna, what a spanking fine girl!" said the sailor.

Possibly Miss Nevil overheard this somewhat plain-spoken panegyric, and took it amiss, for she quitted the deck almost immediately. Orso, too, retired soon after. When he had left the deck, Miss Nevil's maid returned to it, and having put sundry questions to the sailor, carried back the following information to her mistress. The "ballata" interrupted by the appearance of Orso, had been composed on the occasion of the death of Colonel Della Rebbia, the father of the aforesaid, who

had been assassinated two years before. The sailor made no question of it that Orso was going back to Corsica *to do vengeance*, that was his expression, and he took upon himself to assert that ere long there would be *fresh meat* in the village of Pietranera. This national phrase being interpreted, the conclusion was, that Signor Orso proposed to himself to assassinate two or three persons suspected of having assassinated his father; persons, indeed, who had been tried for the deed, but who had been declared pure as snow, for this very good reason, that they could do just as they pleased with the judges, the lawyers, the prefect, and the gendarmes. "There is no justice in Corsica," the sailor added; "and I put more faith in a good gun, than in a judge of the Cour Royale. When a man has an enemy, he must choose between the three Ss."[1]

These interesting particulars produced a notable change in Miss Nevil's deportment and way of thinking with regard to Lieutenant Della Rebbia. From that moment he was become a personage in the eyes of the romantic young lady. Now, indeed, that light-hearted carelessness, that air of frankness and good humour, that had prejudiced her against him at first, became an additional merit in her eyes, for they were proofs of the profound dissimulation of a strong soul, that suffered none of its hidden emotions to betray themselves by any outward sign. Orso appeared to her a sort of Fiesco, concealing vast designs under a show of frivolity; and though it is less noble to kill a few scoundrels, than to deliver one's country, still a brave vengeance is a brave thing: besides, women rather like a hero to have nothing about him belonging to politics. Miss Nevil now remarked for the first time, that the young lieutenant had very large eyes, white teeth, a graceful figure, education, and something of the habits of good society. She spoke to him frequently the next day, and his conversation interested her; he was much

[1] A national saying—that is, *schioppetto*, *stiletto*, *strada*, carbine, dagger, flight.

questioned about his country, of which he gave an intelligent account. Corsica, which he had quitted when very young, to go first to college and afterwards to the Ecole Militaire, had remained in his imagination decked with poetic colours. He grew animated as he talked of its mountains, its forests, and the original manners of its inhabitants. As may be supposed, the word "vengeance" occurred more than once in the course of these conversations, for it is impossible to speak of the Corsicans, without attacking or defending their proverbial passion. Orso somewhat surprised Miss Nevil, by expressing in general terms his condemnation of the interminable feuds of his countrymen. He offered some excuse for them, however, as far as the peasants were concerned, and asserted that the "vendetta" was the duel of the poor. So truly was this the case, as he said, that people do not proceed to assassinate, till they have first uttered their defiance in due form. "Look to yourself, I am on my guard," such are the words consecrated by immemorial usage, which two enemies exchange before they lie in ambush for each other. "There are more murders in Corsica," he added, "than anywhere else; but you will never find these crimes instigated by a sordid motive. We have many murderers, it is true, but not one robber."

Miss Nevil watched him narrowly as he pronounced the words "vengeance" and "murder," but without discovering the least trace of emotion in his features. As she had set it down for certain that he had the strength of mind necessary to render him impenetrable to all eyes—her own of course excepted—she continued in the firm persuasion that the manes of Colonel Della Rebbia would not long await the satisfaction they craved.

The schooner was now in sight of Corsica. The captain named the principal points of the island, and though they were all perfectly unknown to Miss Nevil she felt some pleasure in learning their names. There is nothing more tiresome than an anonymous landscape. Sometimes with the help of the colonel's

telescope an inhabitant might be discovered, dressed in brown, armed with a long gun, and galloping his small horse along rapidly sloping ground. To Miss Nevil's imagination every one of these was a bandit, or a son going to revenge his father's death; but Orso assured her it was but some peaceful inhabitant of the neighbouring town travelling on his business, and that he carried his gun less from necessity than for fashion sake, just as a dandy never goes out of doors without his cane. Though a gun is a less noble and less poetical weapon than a dagger, in Miss Nevil's opinion it was a more becoming ornament for a man than a cane, and she recollected that all Lord Byron's heroes die by a ball and not by the classic poignard.

After three days' sailing our party found themselves opposite Les Sanguinaires, and the magnificent panorama of the gulf of Ajaccio opened before them. It is with good reason this gulf is compared to the bay of Naples; and just as the schooner was entering the port, a mâquis on fire, covering the Punta di Girato with smoke, recalled Vesuvius to mind, and added to the resemblance. To render it complete it would be necessary that the army of an Attila should burst upon the environs of Naples, for everything is dead and deserted round about Ajaccio. Instead of those elegant edifices to be seen in every direction, from Castellamare to Cape Miseno, there is nothing visible round the gulf of Ajaccio but gloomy mâquis, and in the background arid mountains: not one villa, not one dwelling; only here and there on the heights round the city, some isolated white erections stand out from a ground of verdure; these are mortuary chapels and family tombs. Everything in this country is of a grave and melancholy beauty.

The aspect of the city, particularly at this period, still further increased the impression caused by the solitude around. There was no movement in the streets, where nothing was to be seen but a few listless figures, and those always the same: no women except a few peasants, who came to sell their produce. You

never heard loud talking, singing, or laughing as in the towns of Italy. Now and then under the shade of a tree, upon the public walk, a dozen peasants, armed to the teeth, might be seen playing cards or looking on. There was no shouting among them, no disputing; if the gamblers grew heated, there would be heard pistol-shots, which always came before threats. The Corsican is naturally grave and taciturn. In the evening some figures make their appearance to enjoy the refreshing coolness, but the promenaders in the *cours* are almost all strangers. The natives of the island remain before their doors; every one seems on the watch like a hawk upon its nest.

CHAPTER IV.

After having visited the house where Napoleon was born, after having procured a scrap of paper from the wall by means more or less catholic, Miss Nevil felt herself overcome two days after her arrival in Corsica with a deep feeling of sadness, such as naturally affects every stranger, who finds himself in a country the unsocial habits of which seem to condemn him to complete isolation. She repented of her sudden caprice, but to go back at once would have compromised her reputation as an intrepid traveller: she therefore made up her mind to have patience, and to kill time in the best way she could. In pursuance of this magnanimous resolution, she brought out her crayons and her colours, sketched views of the gulf, and drew the portrait of a dark-skinned peasant, who sold melons like a continental hawker, but who had a white beard, and looked the most ferocious villain conceivable. Finding all this insufficient to amuse her, she resolved to turn the brain of the descendant of the corporals, and the project was not difficult of execution, because, far from hastening to his village, Orso seemed to find

himself very much at home at Ajaccio, although not on terms of intimacy with any one there. Besides, Miss Nevil had proposed to herself a noble task, that of civilising this mountain bear, and making him renounce the evil intentions with which he returned to his native island. Since she had taken the trouble of studying his character, the thought had struck her that it would be a pity to let this young man run headlong to ruin, and that it would redound to her glory to convert a Corsican.

Our travellers disposed of their days according to the following programme. In the morning the colonel and Orso went out shooting, whilst Miss Nevil drew or wrote to her friends, chiefly for the purpose of dating her letters from Ajaccio. About six o'clock the gentlemen returned laden with game; they dined; Miss Nevil sang; the colonel went to sleep; and the young people remained to a very late hour chatting.

Some formality or another, concerning his passport, had obliged the colonel to call on the prefect. That functionary, suffering terribly from ennui, like most of his colleagues, had been delighted to hear of the arrival of a wealthy Englishman, a man of station, and the father of a handsome daughter. Accordingly, he had received him with the most marked courtesy, and had been profuse in his civilities; furthermore, very few days elapsed before he returned the visit. The colonel, who had just dined, was stretched comfortably on the sofa, very nearly asleep; his daughter was seated before a dilapidated piano, singing; Orso was turning over the leaves of her music-book, and gazing at the shoulders and the fair hair of the performer. M. le préfet was announced; the piano was hushed: the colonel rose, rubbed his eyes, and presented the prefect to his daughter:—"I do not introduce M. Della Rebbia to you," he said, "for you are no doubt acquainted."

"Monsieur is the son of Colonel Della Rebbia?" the prefect inquired with some appearance of embarrassment. Orso replied in the affirmative.

"I had the honour to know your father," observed the prefect.

The ordinary topics of conversation were soon exhausted. The colonel yawned frequently, in spite of himself; Orso, in his capacity of liberal, did not choose to talk with a satellite of the government; Miss Nevil sustained the conversation single-handed. The prefect did not suffer it to languish as far as he was concerned, and evidently felt a lively pleasure in talking of Paris and of the great world to a lady who was acquainted with all the persons of note in European society. From time to time, in the midst of his talking, he watched Orso with a singular expression of curiosity.

"It was on the continent you became acquainted with M. Della Rebbia?" he said to Miss Nevil, who replied with some embarrassment that she had made his acquaintance in the vessel, in which they had arrived in Corsica.

"He is a thorough gentleman," said the prefect, in a low voice, "has he told you," he continued in a still lower tone, "what is his reason for returning to Corsica?"

Miss Nevil assumed a dignified air.—"I did not ask him," she replied. "Will you not inquire of him yourself?"

The prefect was silent, but some minutes afterwards, hearing Orso address some words of English to the colonel—"You have travelled, it appears, a good deal, monsieur," he remarked. "You must have forgotten Corsica—and its customs."

"It is true, I was very young when I left it."

"You are still in the army?"

"I am on half-pay.

"I make no doubt, you have been too long in the French army not to have become wholly French."—He pronounced these words with marked emphasis.

The Corsicans do not regard it as a particular compliment to be reminded that they belong to the *grande nation*. They choose to be a distinct people, and prove their title in this respect sufficiently well. Orso, somewhat nettled, replied,—"Do

you think, M. le préfet, that a Corsican has need to serve in the French army to make him a man of honour?"

"Surely not," said the prefect, "nothing can be farther from my thoughts. I speak only of certain customs of this country, some of which are not such as a servant of the government could wish." He laid an emphasis on the word customs, and put on the gravest expression his features could assume. Soon after he rose and took his leave, having first obtained a promise from Miss Nevil that she would call on his wife at the prefecture.

When he was gone, "Well," said Miss Nevil, "I should hardly have known what a prefect was, if we had not come to Corsica. The one we have just seen appears to me to be a very agreeable specimen of the class."

"For my part," said Orso, "I cannot say as much for him; he seems to be rather an odd sort of a person with his emphatic manners, and his air of mystery."

The colonel was more than dozing; Miss Nevil, casting a glance towards him, said almost in a whisper, "Now do you know I do not think him so mysterious as you would make him appear; I think I understood him."

"You are unquestionably very clear-sighted, Miss Nevil; and if you see any wit in what the gentleman has been saying, why then you have put it there, that's all."

"That is a phrase of the Marquis de Mascarille, I think, M. Della Rebbia; but—shall I give you a proof of my penetration? I am something of a diviner, and I know what people think whom I have seen twice."

"Good heavens! you alarm me. If you can really read my thoughts, I know hardly whether I ought to be glad or sorry."

"Monsieur Della Rebbia," said Miss Nevil, blushing, "our acquaintance is but of a few days' date; but at sea and in barbarous countries—you will excuse me I trust—people become friends sooner than under ordinary circumstances. Do not be

surprised, therefore, if I speak to you as a friend of matters of a private nature, with which a stranger ought not perhaps to interfere."

"Oh! do not use that word, Miss Nevil; the other is much more welcome to me."

"Well, then, monsieur, I must tell you that without having pried into your secrets, I find myself acquainted with them in part, and there are some of them that distress me. I am aware of the calamity that has befallen your family; I have heard a great deal of the vindictive character of your countrymen, and of their manner of taking vengeance. Was it not to this the prefect alluded?"

"Miss Nevil! Can you suppose"——And Orso grew pale as death.

"No, M. Della Rebbia," she said, interrupting him, "I know that you are a gentleman, and a man of honour. You have told me yourself that at present the common people alone among your countrymen practise the vendetta,—which you are pleased to denominate a species of duel."

"Do you then think me capable of ever becoming an assassin?"

"Since I have mentioned the subject to you, Monsieur Orso, it must be very plain to you that I do not suspect you; and if I have spoken to you," she continued casting down her eyes, "it is because it struck me that when returned home, surrounded perhaps by barbarous prejudices, it would be a satisfaction to you to know that there is some one who respects you for your courage in resisting them.—Come," said she, rising, "let us talk no more of these horrid things, they make my head ache, and besides it is very late. You are not angry with me? Good night then, in English fashion." And she held out her hand.

Orso took it gravely, and with an appearance of deep feeling. "Mademoiselle," he said, "do you know there are moments when I feel the national instinct revive within me? Sometimes

when I think of my poor father—horrible thoughts beset me. Thanks to you, I am for ever delivered from them. Again and again I thank you."

He was about to say more; but Miss Nevil let fall a tea-spoon, and the noise awoke the colonel.

"Della Rebbia, five o'clock to-morrow morning. Don't be later."

"Very well, colonel."

CHAPTER V.

The next day, shortly before the sportsmen's return, Miss Nevil, who had gone to walk by the seaside, was on her way back to the inn, when she saw a young woman entering the town, dressed in black, and mounted on a small but strong and active horse. She was followed by a sort of peasant, likewise on horseback, dressed in a brown cloth jacket torn at the elbows, and a flask hung round his neck, a pistol in his belt, and a gun in his hand, the stock of which rested in a kind of pocket attached to the saddle; in a word, the complete costume of a brigand of a melodrama, or of a Corsican shopkeeper on a journey. The remarkable beauty of the girl first arrested Miss Nevil's attention. She seemed about twenty, tall, fair, with deep blue eyes, rosy lips, and teeth like enamel. Her looks bespoke at once pride, uneasiness, and sadness. On her head she wore the black silk veil called "mezzaro," which the Genoese introduced into Corsica, and which is so becoming. Long tresses of chestnut hair formed a turban as it were round her head. Her dress was neat, but exceedingly simple.

Miss Nevil had leisure enough to make her observations, for the lady in the silk veil had stopped in the street to ask some one a question, in which, to judge from the expression of her eyes, she was greatly interested; upon receiving an answer she

whipped her horse, set off at a round trot, and did not stop till she reached the door of the hotel where Colonel Nevil and Orso were lodging. There, after exchanging a few words with the landlord, the young lady alighted nimbly from her saddle, and sat down on the stone bench beside the inn door, whilst her attendant took the horses to the stable. Miss Nevil passed, in her Parisian costume, close before the stranger, who never raised her eyes. Opening her window a quarter of an hour afterwards, she saw the lady in the veil still seated in the same place, and in the same attitude. Presently, the colonel and Orso made their appearance, returning from shooting. The innkeeper then said a few words to the stranger lady, pointing at the same time to Della Rebbia. She coloured deeply, sprang from her seat, advanced a few paces, and then stopped short, as if she had been struck motionless. Orso stood close before her with a look of earnest inquiry.

"You are Orso Antonio Della Rebbia?" she said, in a voice of emotion. "I am Colomba."

"Colomba!" exclaimed Orso; and throwing his arms round her, he kissed her affectionately, to the no small surprise of the colonel and his daughter.

"Pardon me, brother," said Colomba, "for coming without your orders; but I heard from some friends that you were arrived, and I longed so to see you."

Orso kissed her once more; then turning to the colonel, "This is my sister," he said, "I should not have known her if she had not told me her name—Colomba, Colonel Sir Thomas Nevil.—You will be good enough to excuse me, colonel. I cannot have the honour of dining with you to-day. My sister——"

"Why, where the deuce do you mean to dine, my dear fellow? You know there is but one dinner in this confounded inn, and we have bespoken it. Mademoiselle will do my daughter a great pleasure if she will join us."

Colomba looked at her brother, who consented without much

pressing, and all three entered the largest room in the inn, which served the colonel for parlour and drawing-room. Mademoiselle Della Rebbia, on being presented to Miss Nevil, made her a profound obeisance, but did not speak a word. She was evidently very much scared, being probably, for the first time in her life, among well-bred strangers. Still there was nothing glaringly provincial in her manners. In her, strangeness took off from the appearance of awkwardness. Miss Nevil was pleased with her for this very reason; and as there was no vacant chamber in the inn invaded by the colonel and his suite, Miss Nevil carried her condescension or her curiosity so far as to offer Mademoiselle Della Rebbia to have a bed put up for her in her own room. Colomba stammered out a few words of thanks, and hastily followed Miss Nevil's maid, to make such little arrangements to her toilette as were rendered necessary by a journey on horseback, in dust and sun.

On returning to the sitting-room, she stopped before the colonel's guns, which the sportsmen had placed in a corner. "What fine guns!" she said. "Are they yours, brother?"

"No, they are the colonel's English guns; they are as good as they are handsome."

"I should very much like you to have one like them."

"One of those three certainly belongs to Della Rebbia," said the colonel; "and good use he makes of it. What do you think of fourteen shots to-day, and every shot killing?"

There now began a struggle of generosity, in which Orso was vanquished, to the great satisfaction of his sister, as was plain from the expression of childlike delight that suddenly lighted up her features, so serious a moment before. "Take your choice, my friend," said the colonel. Orso refused. "Well, then, your sister shall choose for you." Colomba did not wait to be asked twice; she chose the least ornamented of the guns; but it was an excellent Manton, of wide bore. "This ought to carry ball well," she said.

Her brother was uneasily expressing his thanks when the opportune announcement of dinner put an end to his embarrassment. Miss Nevil was delighted to see that Colomba, who was unwilling at first to sit down to table, and only gave way upon a look from her brother, made the sign of the cross like a good catholic before she began to eat. "Good!" she said to herself; "this is primitive," and she promised herself she would make many an interesting observation touching the proceedings of this young representative of the ancient manners of Corsica. As for Orso, he was evidently rather ill at ease, for fear, no doubt, that his sister would say or do something savouring too much of her village. But Colomba kept her eye constantly upon him, and regulated all her movements by his. Sometimes she gazed steadfastly upon him with a strange expression of sadness, and, at such times, if Orso's eyes met hers, he was the first to turn away, as though he would escape a question mentally addressed to him by his sister, the import of which he knew but too well. The party spoke French, for the colonel knew very little of Italian. Colomba understood French, and even pronounced tolerably well the few words she was obliged to exchange with her entertainers.

After dinner the colonel, who had noticed the sort of constraint subsisting between the brother and sister, asked Orso, with his usual frankness, if he did not wish to converse in private with Mademoiselle Colomba, offering in that case to go, with his daugher, into the adjoining room. But Orso hastened to thank him, and to assure him that his sister and he would have plenty of time to converse in Pietranera, the village where he was about to fix his residence.

The colonel, therefore, took his accustomed place on the sofa, and Miss Nevil, despairing of making the fair Colomba talk, begged Orso to read her a canto of her favourite Dante. Orso selected the canto in the "Inferno," containing the episode of Francesca da Rimini, and began to read with the best skill he

could those sublime lines that so well portray the danger of reading a book of love, *solus cum sola.* As the reading proceeded, Colomba drew near the table, raised her head, which she had kept bent down, her dilated pupils glowed with strange fire, she reddened and grew pale by turns, and moved restlessly and nervously on her chair. Admirable Italian organisation, that has no need of a pedant's lectures to enable it to comprehend and enjoy the beauties of poetry !

When the reading was ended, " How beautiful that is ! " she exclaimed. " Who wrote that, brother ? "

Orso was a little disconcerted, and Miss Nevil replied with a smile, that it was a Florentine poet who had been dead for several centuries.

"You shall read Dante," said Orso, " when we are at Pietranera."

" O how beautiful it is ! " Colomba exclaimed again, and she repeated three or four stanzas she had retained, first in a low voice, then, gathering spirit, she declaimed them aloud, with more expression than her brother had thrown into them when reading. Miss Nevil was astonished. " You seem," she said, " to be very fond of poetry. How I envy you the pleasure you will enjoy in reading Dante for the first time ! "

" You see, Miss Nevil," said Orso, " what power Dante's lines possess, thus to move a little barbarian that knows nothing but her *Pater.* But I am wrong : now I think of it, Colomba herself is of the craft. She stammered verses when a mere child, and my father told me in his letters that she was the greatest ' voceratrice ' in Pietranera, and for two leagues round it."

Colomba cast an imploring glance upon her brother. Miss Nevil had heard of the Corsican " improvisatrici," and was exceedingly curious to hear one. She pressed Colomba, therefore, very earnestly, to give her a specimen of her talent, to the great mortification of Orso, who now regretted exceedingly that he had mentioned his sister's poetical powers. It was to

no purpose he protested that nothing can be flatter and more insipid than a Corsican ballata, and that it would be tantamount to betraying his country to listen to Corsican verses after those of Dante. He only increased Miss Nevil's curiosity, and was at last obliged to say to his sister, "Well, improvise something, but let it be short."

Colomba sighed, looked steadily for a moment at the tablecloth, and then at the ceiling; finally, putting her hand before her eyes, like those ostriches that take courage and fancy they are not seen when they do not see, she sang, or rather declaimed, in a somewhat timid voice, the following stanzas:

THE YOUNG GIRL AND THE RINGDOVE.

In the deep and dusky valley, o'er yon mountains far away,
Where the sunbeams only tarry for one brief hour in the day,
There's a dwelling wrapt in gloom, above its roof no smoke is seen,
Its doors are barred, its casements closed, its threshold grassy green.

But at noontide, when the sun comes, a casement is displayed,
And busy with her spinning-wheel, there sits the orphan maid;
And ever as she spins, she sings in mournful tones and low:
She sings, but no kind voice responds to soothe the orphan's woe.

It chanced one day, a day of spring, upon a neighbouring tree
A ringdove lighting sat and heard the orphan's melody.
And if thou mournest, maid, thou'rt not alone in grief, it said,
The cruel hawk hath struck my mate, and I pine for the dead.

O ringdove, show me speedily the hawk hath done this wrong,
And I will lay the spoiler low, be his pinions e'er so strong:
Though scornful of thy feeble plaint among the clouds he soar,
The vengeful ball shall smite him there, the dust shall drink his gore.

But I, dejected and alone, O who will be my stay?
Or who will bring me back again my brother far away?—
If thou wilt tell me, maiden, where thy brother doth abide,
My wings shall waft thee o'er the sea, and set thee by his side.

"That's what I call a well-bred ringdove!" cried Orso,

embracing his sister with an emotion in manifest contrast with the tone of pleasantry he affected.

"Your song is a charming one," said Miss Nevil. "You must write it in my album. I will translate it into English, and have it set to music."

The gallant colonel, who had not understood a word, joined his compliments to those offered by his daughter, and added, "That ringdove you speak of, mademoiselle, was the bird we had fricasseed for dinner, eh?"

Miss Nevil produced her album, and was not a little surprised to see the way in which the improvisatrice wrote down her song. The lines, instead of ranging in the usual order, were written continuously over the whole breadth of the paper; so that the well-known definition of poetical composition was no longer applicable to them—namely, short lines of unequal length, with a margin on each side. Furthermore, the somewhat capricious orthography of Mademoiselle Colomba more than once elicited a smile from Miss Nevil, whilst Orso's fraternal vanity was on the rack.

It being now bed-time, the two young ladies retired to their chamber, where, whilst Miss Nevil was taking off her necklace, earrings, and bracelets, she observed her companion removing from beneath her gown something long like a busk, but of a very different shape. Colomba placed it carefully and almost furtively upon a table under her veil: she then knelt down, and devoutly said her prayers; two minutes afterwards, she was in bed. Naturally very inquisitive, and like most English ladies, slow in undressing, Miss Nevil approached the table, and under the pretence of looking for a pin, raised the veil, and beheld a long dagger, curiously mounted in silver and mother of pearl: the workmanship was remarkable, the weapon was antique, and altogether such as an amateur would have highly prized.

"Is it the fashion in this country?" said Miss Nevil, with a

smile, "for ladies to carry such an implement as this in their stays?"

"It is very necessary," said Colomba, sighing; "there are so many bad people!"

"And would you really have the courage to use it thus?" And Miss Nevil, with the dagger in her hand, suited the action to the word, making the gesture of striking from above downwards, as they do on the stage.

"Yes, if it was necessary," said Colomba, with her sweet and musical voice, "to defend myself or my friends. But that is not the way to hold it; you might wound yourself if the person you struck at avoided the blow. Then, sitting up in bed, "See, this is the way; you must strike backhanded, and more upwards. In this way it is mortal, they say. Happy are they who have no need of such weapons."

She sighed, sank back on her pillow, and closed her eyes. Never was there seen a more beautiful, a nobler, or a more virgin-like head. Phidias would have asked no better model from which to sculpture his Minerva.

CHAPTER VI.

It is in obedience to the precepts of Horace that I have thus plunged *in medias res.* Now that all my characters are asleep —the fair Colomba, and the colonel and his daughter—I will seize upon the opportunity to acquaint my reader with certain details of which he must not be left in ignorance, if he means to follow the further course of this veracious history. He is already aware that Colonel Della Rebbia, Orso's father, fell by the hand of an assassin. Now a man is not assassinated in Corsica as he is in France or elsewhere, by the first jail bird that finds no better means at hand to rob him of his valuables;

in that country a man is assassinated by his enemies; but why he has enemies is often very hard to say. Many families hate each other from inveterate habit, whilst all tradition of the original cause of their hatred is completely lost.

The family to which Colonel Della Rebbia belonged, hated several other families, but with a special hatred that of the Barricini, for the reason, as some said, that in the sixteenth century a Della Rebbia had seduced a Barricini, and had been afterwards poignarded by a relation of the injured girl. Others, indeed, give a different version of the story, alleging that it was a Della Rebbia who had been seduced, and a Barricini poignarded. Be this as it may, there was blood between the two houses. Contrary to custom, however, this murder had not been productive of others; for the Della Rebbias and the Barricini had been persecuted alike by the Genoese government, and the young men of both families having expatriated themselves, the two were for several generations deprived of their energetic representatives. At the close of the last century a Della Rebbia, an officer in the Neapolitan service, got into a quarrel in a gambling-house with some military men, who, amongst other insulting expressions, called him a Corsican goat. He drew, but being alone against three, he would have fared badly if a stranger, who was playing at the same table, had not cried out, "I am a Corsican too!" and taken part with him. The stranger was a Barricini, who, be it observed, was not acquainted with his countryman. Upon an explanation taking place, a profuse interchange of courtesies and vows of eternal friendship passed between them; for on the continent Corsicans very readily attach themselves to each other, though it is quite otherwise with them on their native soil. This was strongly exemplified in the present instance. Della Rebbia and Barricini were intimate friends so long as they remained in Italy; but after their return to Corsica they met but rarely, though both inhabiting the same village, and when they died it was said they

had not spoken to each other for five or six years. Their sons lived in the same way, "on etiquette," as they say in the island. The one, Ghilfuccio, Orso's father, was a military man; Giudice Barricini, the other, was a barrister. Having both become heads of families, and being parted by their callings in life, they had seldom any opportunity of seeing or hearing of each other.

One day, however, about the year 1809, Giudice reading in a newspaper in Bastia, that Captain Ghilfuccio had just been decorated, said before witnesses that he was not surprised, since General —— protected the captain's family. The expression was reported to Ghilfuccio in Vienna, whereupon he remarked to a countryman that on his arrival in Corsica he would find Giudice very rich, since he drew more money from the causes he lost than from those he gained. It was never known whether he meant to insinuate thereby that the barrister betrayed his clients, or merely alluded to the common-place notion, that a bad cause is sometimes more lucrative to a lawyer than a good one. Be this as it may, the epigram reached the ears of Barricini, and he did not forget it. In 1812 he applied to be appointed mayor of his commune, and had every hope of succeeding, when General —— wrote to the prefect, recommending a relation of Ghilfuccio's wife; the prefect hastened to comply with the general's wishes, and Barricini made no doubt but that he owed his disappointment to the intrigues of Ghilfuccio. After the emperor's downfall in 1814, the general's protégé was denounced as a Bonapartist, and superseded by Barricini, who was again turned out of office during the Hundred Days; but after the storm had blown over he resumed possession of the mayoralty seal and the registers of the civil administration with great pomp.

From that moment his star grew more brilliant than ever. Colonel Della Rebbia, retired on half-pay to Pietranera, had to defend himself against a covert war of pettifogging hostilities.

Sometimes an action for damages was brought against him for trespass committed by his horse upon the enclosures of the mayor; at another time the latter, under pretence of repairing the floor of the church, removed a broken flagstone bearing the arms of the Della Rebbia family, and covering the tomb of one of its members. If the goats devoured the colonel's vines the proprietors of the animals found a protector in the mayor; the grocer who kept the post-office at Pietranera, and the rural guard, an old mutilated soldier, both of them clients of the house of Della Rebbia, were one after the other deprived of their places and superseded by the creatures of the Barricini.

The colonel's wife expressed, on her death-bed, her wish to be buried in the midst of a small wood, where she had been fond of walking. The mayor forthwith declared that she should be interred in the cemetery of the commune, as he had received no authorization to permit of an isolated place of burial. The colonel, greatly exasperated, declared that he would not wait for the authorization, but bury his wife, meanwhile, in the spot she had selected, and he had a grave dug there. The mayor, on his part, caused one to be made in the cemetery, and summoned the gendarmes, that the law, as he said, might be duly enforced. On the day of the funeral, the two parties were confronted bodily, and there was some reason to apprehend a battle for the remains of Madame Della Rebbia. Some forty well-armed peasants, led by the relations of the deceased, obliged the curé, on leaving the church, to take the road to the wood. On the other hand, the mayor came forward with his two sons, his clients, and the gendarmes, to oppose this. When he advanced and summoned the procession to retrace their steps, he was assailed with shouts and threats; his adversaries had the advantage in point of numbers, and they seemed determined. Several guns were cocked when he made his appearance, and it is even said that a shepherd levelled his piece at him; but the colonel threw it up, saying, "Let no one fire without my

orders." The mayor "had a natural fear of blows," like Panurge, and declining the fight, he withdrew with his escort. The funeral procession then pursued its way, taking care to select the longest road, so as to pass before the mayoralty. As they filed before it, an idiot, who had joined the procession, took it into his head to cry out "Vive l'Empereur!" Two or three voices responded to the cry, and the Rebbianists, growing more and more heated, proposed to kill one of the mayor's oxen that impeded their line of march. Fortunately, the colonel prevented that act of violence.

It will readily be supposed that an official statement was drawn up, and that the mayor presented the prefect with a report composed in his most sublime style, representing laws, divine and human, trampled under foot,—the majesty of him, the mayor, and of the reverend curé, denied and insulted,—Colonel Della Rebbia putting himself at the head of a Bonapartist conspiracy, to change the order of succession to the throne, and to excite the citizens to arm against each other, crimes denounced by the articles 86 and 91 of the penal code.

The exaggeration of this report spoiled its effect. The colonel wrote to the prefect and to the attorney-general; a relation of his wife was connected by marriage with one of the deputies of the island, and another was cousin to the president of the Cour Royale. Thanks to this interest, the conspiracy ended in smoke; Madame Della Rebbia remained in the wood, and the idiot alone was sentenced to a fortnight's imprisonment.

The avocat Barricini, vexed at the result of this affair, turned his batteries in another direction. He rummaged out an old title-deed, on the strength of which he set about contesting the colonel's right to a certain water-course which served to turn a mill. A suit was carried on for a long while. At the end of a year the court was about to give judgment, and to all appearance, in favour of the colonel, when M. Barricini placed in the attorney general's hands a letter signed by a certain

Agostini, a famous bandit, threatening him (the mayor) with fire and death if he did not desist from his pretensions. It is well known that the protection of a bandit is in great request in Corsica, and that to oblige their friends they frequently interpose in private quarrels. The mayor was turning this letter to his advantage, when a fresh incident occurred to complicate the affair. The bandit Agostini wrote to the attorney-general, complaining that his handwriting had been counterfeited, and his character compromised, by making him appear in the light of a man who traded in the influence he possessed. "If I discover the individual who committed this forgery," he said, at the conclusion of his letter, "I will inflict upon him an exemplary punishment!"

It was clear Agostini had not written the threatening letter to the mayor; the Della Rebbias accused the Barricini of it, and *vice versâ.* Violent threats were uttered on both sides, and justice was perplexed and unable to say on which side the guilty were to be found.

Matters stood thus, when Colonel Ghilfuccio was assassinated. The following are the facts as deposed to in the course of the official inquiry. On the 2nd of August, 18—, towards nightfall as the woman Madeleine Pietri was carrying corn to Pietranera, she heard two shots in rapid succession fired, as she thought, in the hollow way leading to the village, about one hundred and fifty paces from where she stood. Immediately afterwards she saw a man running, with his body bent down, through a vineyard path towards the village. He stopped a moment and turned round, but the distance prevented the woman Pietri from distinguishing his features, and besides, he had a vine-leaf in his mouth that almost hid his whole face. He made a sign with his hand to a companion whom the woman did not see, and then disappeared among the vines.

The woman Pietri, throwing down her load, ran up the path and found Colonel Della Rebbia bathed in blood, and shot in two

places, but still breathing. Beside him was his gun charged and cocked, as if he had put himself in a posture of defence against an enemy in front, at the moment another shot him from behind. He rattled in his breathing, and was struggling against the gripe of death, but could not utter a word, a circumstance which the medical men explained from the nature of his wounds, which had gone through his lungs. The discharge of blood was suffocating him; it oozed out slowly like a red froth. The woman in vain raised him up and put a few questions to him. She saw plainly he wished to speak, but could not make himself understood. Observing that he tried to put his hand in his pocket, she hastened to take from it a small pocket-book, which she put open before him. The wounded man took the pencil from the pocket-book, and tried to write. In fact, the witness saw him form several characters, with great effort; but not being able to read, she could not make out their meaning. Exhausted by this exertion, the colonel left the pocket-book in the woman's hand, which he pressed strongly, gazing at her with a strange look, as though he would say (these were the witness's own words), "It is important; it is the name of my murderer!"

The woman Pietri was going up to the village when she met the mayor, Barricini, and his son Vincentello. It was then almost night. She related what she had seen; the mayor took the pocket-book, and ran to the mayoralty to put on his official scarf, and to call his secretary and the gendarmes. Left alone with young Vincentello, the woman Pietri proposed to him, that they should go and assist the colonel, in case he was still living, but Vincentello replied that if he went near a dying man who had been the inveterate enemy of his family, he would be accused of having killed him. The mayor came back shortly after, found the colonel dead, had the body removed, and drew up an official statement of the affair.

In spite of his natural perturbation on the occasion, M. Barricini had made haste to place the colonel's pocket-book

under seal, and to make all the inquiries in his power; but none of them led to any important discovery. When the examining magistrate arrived, the pocket-book was opened, and on a page soiled with blood, were seen some letters traced with a failing hand, but still very legible. The page bore the word "Agosti," and the magistrate doubted not but that the colonel had intended to point out Agostini as his assassin. Colomba Della Rebbia, however, having been summoned by the magistrate, demanded permission to examine the pocket-book; after turning over the leaves for a long time, she stretched out her hand towards the mayor, and cried out, "There stands the murderer." She then related with amazing clearness and precision, considering her intense affliction, that her father had a few days before received a letter from her brother and had burned it, first taking the precaution to write down in his pocket-book the address of Orso, who had just removed to another garrison. Now that address was no longer in his pocket-book; and Colomba concluded that the mayor had torn out the leaf on which it was written, the same probably on which her father had inscribed the name of his murderer; and she charged the mayor with having substituted for this the name of Agostini. The magistrate found that a leaf was actually missing from the folded sheet on which the name was written; but presently he remarked that leaves were also wanting from the other sheets, and witnesses stated that it had been the colonel's practice to tear out pages from his pocket-book when he wished to light a cigar. It was therefore exceedingly probable that he had inadvertently burned the address of his son. Moreover, it was established in evidence, that when the mayor received the pocket-book from the woman Pietri, it was too dark for him to read; that he did not stop for an instant on his way to the mayoralty; that the brigadier of gendarmes went in with him, saw him light a lamp, put the pocket-book under cover, and seal it up before his eyes.

When the brigadier had concluded his testimony, Colomba, in a state bordering on distraction, threw herself on her knees before him, and besought him, by all he held most sacred, to declare if he had not left the mayor alone for a single instant. The brigadier, after a moment's hesitation, visibly affected by the girl's passionate appeal, admitted that he had gone into an adjoining room to get a large sheet of paper, but that he did not remain there a minute, and that the mayor had talked to him without interruption all the time he was groping for the paper in a drawer. He deposed besides, that on his return the bloody pocket-book was still on the table, on the very spot where the mayor had laid it down on entering the house.

M. Barricini gave his testimony with the utmost calmness. He made allowances, he said, for Mademoiselle Della Rebbia's violence, and freely condescended to justify himself. He proved that he had remained in the village all the evening in question; that his son Vincentello was with him in front of the mayoralty at the moment the crime was committed; and that his son Orlanduccio, having been that very day attacked with fever, had never quitted his bed. He produced all the guns in his house, not one of which had been recently discharged. He added, that as to the pocket-book he had felt its importance at once, and had sealed it up and placed it in the hands of his adjunct, foreseeing that the known enmity between himself and the colonel might make him an object of suspicion. Finally, he adverted to the fact that Agostini had threatened with death the person who had written a letter in his name; and he hinted that the miscreant had probably suspected the colonel, and had assassinated him. Such an act of vengeance, prompted by an analogous motive, was not without a parallel in bandit annals.

Five days after the death of Colonel Della Rebbia, Agostini was surprised by a detachment of soldiers, and killed after a desperate resistance. There was found upon him a letter from Colomba, conjuring him to declare whether or not he was

guilty of the murder imputed to him. The bandit not having replied, it was pretty generally concluded that he had not had the courage to say to a daughter that he had killed her father. Nevertheless, it was whispered by those who gave themselves out as well acquainted with the character of Agostini, that if he had killed the colonel he would have boasted of the deed. Another bandit, named Brandolaccio, sent a message to Colomba, pledging "his honour," to the innocence of his comrade; but the only proof he adduced was that Agostini had never told him he suspected the colonel.

The upshot was, that the Barricini were left unmolested; the examining magistrate was lavish in his praise of the mayor; and the latter put a worthy close to his own honourable conduct in the affair, by resigning all pretensions to the stream for which he had gone to law with Colonel Della Rebbia.

Colomba, in pursuance of the national custom, chanted an extemporaneous ballata over her father's body, in presence of his assembled friends. She poured out in it all her hatred to the Barricini, accused them distinctly of the murder, and threatened them with the vengeance of her brother. This ballata became very popular, and was the same that Miss Nevil had heard sung by the sailor. On hearing of the death of his father, Orso, who was then in the north of France, asked for leave of absence, but was refused. At first he believed the Barricini guilty, in consequence of a letter from his sister; but he soon after received a copy of all the depositions; and a special letter from the magistrate brought home to him the almost certain conviction that the bandit Agostini had been the sole criminal. Once every three months Colomba wrote to him, reiterating her suspicions, which she called proofs. These accusations made his Corsican blood boil in spite of himself, and there were times when he was not far from sharing his sister's prejudices. Nevertheless, he repeated to her, in every letter he wrote, that her allegations rested on no substantial

grounds, and were deserving of no credit. He even forbade her, but always in vain, to mention the matter to him any more. Thus passed two years, at the end of which he was put on half-pay; and then he thought of returning to his native place, not to take vengeance on men he believed innocent, but to arrange for the marriage of his sister, and to sell his little property, if it would realise sufficient to enable him to live on the continent.

CHAPTER VII.

WHETHER it was that his sister's arrival had strongly awakened in Orso's mind the remembrance of the parental roof, or that Colomba's costume and unpolished manners gave him some pain in presence of his civilised friends, the next day he announced his intention of quitting Ajaccio, and returning to Pietranera. He exacted a promise, however, from the colonel, that he would accept the hospitality of his humble manor when proceeding to Bastia; promising him in return, abundant sport with deer, pheasants, boars, and so forth.

The day before his departure, instead of going out shooting, Orso proposed a walk on the beach. Giving his arm to Miss Nevil he was enabled to converse with perfect freedom, for Colomba remained in the town to make some purchases, and the colonel was every moment straggling from his companions to shoot gulls and noddies, to the great amazement of the passers by, who could not conceive why he wasted his powder on such paltry game.

They took the road leading to the Greek chapel, whence there is a very beautiful view of the bay; but they paid no attention to it.

"Miss Nevil"—said Orso, after a silence that had lasted

long enough to become embarrassing, "tell me frankly, what do you think of my sister?"

"I am very much pleased with her," Miss Nevil replied; "more than with you," she added with a smile, "for she is truly Corsican, and you are an overcivilised barbarian."

"Overcivilised! Well now, in spite of myself I feel that I am relapsing into barbarism since I set foot in this island. A thousand frightful thoughts beset me and torment me—and I longed to have some conversation with you before burying myself in my desert."

"You must rouse your courage, monsieur; look at your sister's resignation; she sets you an example."

"Oh! undeceive yourself. Put no faith in her resignation. She has not yet said a single word to me, but every look of hers tells me plainly what she expects of me."

"And pray what is that?"

"Oh! nothing—only that I should try if your father's gun can kill a man as well as a partridge."

"What an idea! Can you really suppose it possible, after just admitting that she has said nothing to you yet? Really, this is too bad on your part."

"Had she no thoughts of vengeance, she would have spoken to me at once of our father; she has done nothing of the sort. She would have uttered the name of those she regards—unjustly I am sure—as his murderers. But no, not a word about them. Shall I tell you why? We Corsicans, you must know, are a cunning race. My sister is aware that she has not got me wholly in her power, and she does not wish to alarm me whilst I can yet escape her. When once she shall have led me to the verge of the precipice, when my brain has begun to reel, she will plunge me headlong down the abyss." Orso now communicated to Miss Nevil some details respecting the death of his father, and related the chief proofs that combined to make him look on Agostini as the murderer. "Nothing," he con-

bination, therefore, expresses this maxim, which I think a very good one—life is a combat. Now, don't take it into your head that I can interpret hieroglyphics off-hand. It was a very learned pundit who explained these to me. Here, I will give you my scarabœus. When any ugly Corsican thought enters your mind, look at my talisman, and say to yourself, that we must come off victors from the battle with our evil passions. Now, upon my word, I am no bad preacher."

"I will think of you, Miss Nevil, and I will say to myself—"

"Say to yourself you have a friend who would be wretched to know—that you were hanged. Besides, what a sad thing this would be for your ancestors—Messieurs les Caporaux." She let go Orso's arm with a laugh, and running up to her father, "Papa," she said, "leave those poor birds alone, and come and talk poetry with us in Napoleon's grotto."

CHAPTER VIII.

There is always something solemn in a departure, even when people separate but for a short time. Orso was to set out at a very early hour in the morning with his sister, and had taken leave of Miss Nevil the evening before, never supposing that for his sake she would break through her cherished habits of indolence. Their farewell had been cold and constrained. Since the conversation by the sea-side, Miss Nevil felt a misgiving that she had manifested perhaps too warm an interest for Orso, and he on the other hand felt sore at her raillery, and above all at the levity of her tone. There had been a moment when he fancied he could discover in the young English lady's manner towards him the symptoms of nascent affection; but now, foiled and disconcerted by her pleasantries, he said to himself he was nothing in her eyes but a mere casual acquaintance, who would

soon be forgotten. Great, therefore, was the surprise, when, in the morning, as he sat at coffee with the colonel, he saw Miss Nevil enter the room followed by his sister. She had risen at five o'clock, and for an English lady, for Miss Nevil above all, the effort was sufficiently great to inspire him fairly with some degree of vanity.

"I am quite distressed that you should have been disturbed at so early an hour," said Orso. "No doubt it was my sister who woke you up, notwithstanding the cautions I gave her. You have very good reason to be vexed with us. I should not wonder but you wish me 'hanged' already."

"No," said Miss Nevil, in a very low voice, and in Italian, evidently that her father might not overhear her; "but you were cross with me yesterday for my harmless jokes, and I did not wish you to go away with an impression of unkindness on your mind. What terrible people you Corsicans are! Farewell, then; but not for long, I hope." And she held out her hand.

Orso could only answer with a sigh. Colomba coming up to him drew him aside to the recess of the window, and showing him something she had under her veil, talked to him for a moment in whispers.

"My sister," said Orso, turning to Miss Nevil, "wishes to make you a strange sort of a present, mademoiselle; but we Corsicans have little to give—except our affection—which time does not efface. My sister tells me you have looked with some curiosity on this dagger. It is an old heirloom in the family, and may very probably have hung long ago in the belt of one of those same corporals to whom I am indebted for the honour of your acquaintance. Colomba thinks it so precious that she has asked my permission to give it you; but for my part I hardly know whether or not I should grant it, for I fear you will laugh at us."

"The dagger is an extremely interesting object," said Miss Nevil; "but it is a family weapon, and I cannot accept it."

"It is not my father's dagger," Colomba exclaimed, with great eagerness. "It was given to one of my mother's grandfathers by King Theodore. If mademoiselle will accept it, she will give us much pleasure."

"Come, Miss Nevil," said Orso, "do not disdain the dagger of a king."

To a collector, the relics of King Theodore are far more precious than those of the most potent monarchs. The temptation was strong, and Miss Nevil beheld already in imagination the effect the weapon would produce laid on a boudoir table in St. James's Place. "But," she said, taking the dagger with the sort of hesitation people exhibit when they are inclined to accept an offer, and turning on Colomba one of her most gracious smiles, "My dear Mademoiselle Colomba—I really cannot—I must not let you go away thus disarmed."

"My brother is with me," said Colomba, proudly, "and we have the good gun your father gave us. You have loaded it with ball, Orso?"

Miss Nevil kept the dagger, Colomba having first exacted a sou for it in payment, as a precaution against the bad omen of giving edged weapons to one's friends.

At last the moment for departure arrived. Orso pressed Miss Nevil's hand once more; Colomba embraced her, and then presented her rosy lips to the wonder-struck colonel. Miss Nevil stood at the window to see the brother and sister get into their saddles. Colomba's eyes shone with a baleful joy which she had not noticed in them before. That tall strong woman, fanatical in her barbarous notions of honour, pride seated on her brow, her lips arched with a sardonic smile, carrying off the young man armed as if for some untoward expedition, recalled to Miss Nevil's mind the fears Orso had expressed, and she thought she beheld his evil genius in the act of hurrying him to his ruin. Orso, now on horseback, looked up and saw her. Whether it was that he guessed her thoughts, or that he meant it for a last

adieu, he took the Egyptian ring, which he had hung on a ribbon round his neck, and pressed it to his lips. Miss Nevil drew back from the window blushing; then resuming her place almost immediately, she saw the two Corsicans galloping away on their ponies towards the mountains. Half an hour afterwards the colonel pointed them out to her with his telescope, as they skirted along the head of the bay, and she saw that Orso frequently turned his head towards the town. At last they disappeared behind the swamps, the site of which is now overspread by a handsome orchard.

Miss Nevil, looking at herself in the glass, saw that she was pale. "What must this young man think of me?" she said, "and what do I think of him? and why do I think about him, a travelling acquaintance? What brought me to Corsica? Oh! I do not love him—no, no!—besides, the thing is impossible.—And Colomba—I the sister-in-law of a voceratrice! who carries a long dagger!" Here she perceived that she held King Theodore's in her hand. She threw it on her toilette table. "Colomba in London, dancing at Almack's! What a 'lion' to lead about!—After all I should not wonder to see her produce a great sensation. He loves me, I am certain—he is a hero of romance, whose adventurous career I have interrupted. But did he really design revenging his father *à la Corse?*—He was something between a Conrad and a dandy—I have made him a dandy purely, and a dandy with a Corsican tailor!"

She threw herself on her bed and tried to sleep, but it was impossible. I shall not attempt to report the rest of her long soliloquy, in which she repeated more than a hundred times that M. Della Rebbia had never been, was not, and never would be anything to her.

CHAPTER IX.

MEANWHILE Orso pursued his way with his sister. The rapid pace at which they rode prevented them at first from conversing; but when the steepness of the road obliged them to slacken their speed, they interchanged a few words respecting the friends from whom they had just parted. Colomba spoke with enthusiasm of Miss Nevil's beauty, of her rich fair hair, and her exquisite manners. She then asked was the colonel as rich as he seemed, and was Lydia his only daughter. "It would be a good match no doubt," she said. "Her father seems to have much regard for you." Orso making no reply she went on. "Our family was rich formerly; it is still one of the most respectable in the island. All the Signori[1] are bastards. There is no real nobility except in the Corporal families, and you know, Orso, that you are descended from the first Corporals of the island. You know that our family is from beyond the mountains,[2] and that it was the civil wars that obliged us to come over to this side. If I were in your place, Orso, I should not hesitate; I would demand Miss Nevil's hand of her father." Orso shrugged his shoulders. "With her dowry I would purchase the forest of Falsetta and the vineyards below our house:

[1] The descendants of the feudal lords of Corsica are called *signori*. The families of the *signori* and those of the *caporali* dispute with each other the honours of noble blood.

[2] That is to say, from the eastern side. The expression, *di la dei monti*, is very frequent; its meaning varying, of course, with the position of the speaker. Corsica is divided from north to south by a chain of mountains.

I would build a handsome mansion of cut stone, and I would add another story to the old tower, where Sambucuccio killed so many Moors in the days of Count Henri bel Missere.[1]

"You are a silly girl, Colomba," Orso replied, galloping on.

"You are a man, Ors' Anton', and of course you know better than a woman what you are to do. But I should like to know what objection this Englishman could make to an alliance with us. Are there Corporals in England?"

After a long ride, talking in this sort, the brother and sister arrived in a small village not far from Bocognano, where they stopped to dine and pass the night at a friend's house. They were received with that Corsican hospitality which none can appreciate but those who have experienced it. The next day they were escorted a league on their way by their entertainer, who had stood in that sort of relationship to Madame Della Rebbia for which the English language has no name; he had been her *compère*, that is, he had been godfather when she was godmother.

"You see these woods and these mâquis!" he said to Orso, as they were taking leave of each other. "A man who should have had 'a mischance' might live quietly in them for ten years, and never fear that gendarmes or soldiers would look after him there. These woods touch upon the forest of Vizzavona, and a man who has friends at Bocognano and round about need want for nothing in them. That's a handsome gun of yours; it ought to carry a long way. Blood of the Madonna, what a bore! You may kill something better than wild boars with that."

Orso replied coldly that his English gun carried a bullet very far. The friends embraced and each took his own road.

[1] See Filippini, lib. ii.—The Count Arrigo bel Missere died about the year 1100. It is said that, at his death, a voice was heard in the air singing these prophetic words:

E morto il conte Arrigo bel Missere.
E Corsica sarà di male in peggio.

Our travellers were now but a little way from Pietranera, when at the entrance of a defile through which they had to pass, they discovered seven or eight men armed with guns, some seated on stones, others stretched on the grass, and others standing apparently on the watch. Their horses were grazing not far from them. Colomba reconnoitred them for a moment through a small telescope, which she drew out from one of the large leathern pouches worn by all Corsicans when travelling.

"They are our people," she cried out, joyfully, "Pieruccio has punctually fulfilled my orders."

"What people?" inquired Orso.

"Our goatherds. I sent off Pieruccio the evening before last, that he might collect these brave fellows to accompany you to your house. It is not becoming that you should enter Pietranera without an escort, and you must be aware, besides, that the Barricini are capable of everything."

"Colomba," said Orso, sternly, "I have repeatedly requested you never to speak to me again of the Barricini or of your unfounded suspicions. I shall certainly not make an exhibition of myself, going home with this pack of idlers about me: and I am very much displeased that you have brought them together without consulting me."

"You have forgotten your country, brother. It is my place to take care of you when your own imprudence exposes you to danger. It was my duty to do what I have done."

At this moment the goatherds having caught sight of them, sprang upon their horses and galloped down hill to meet them.

"Evviva Ors' Anton'!" shouted a sturdy old man with a white beard, dressed in spite of the heat in a great coat with a hood, made of Corsican cloth, thicker than the shaggy fleeces of his goats. "He is the living picture of his father, only taller and stronger. What a handsome gun! We shall hear tell of this gun, Ors' Anton'."

"Evviva Ors' Anton'," cried all the goatherds in chorus. "We knew well he would come back at last."

"Ah! Ors' Anton'," said a great strapping fellow with a skin the colour of a brick, "what a joyful day it would be for your father if he was here to receive you! Dear heart! you would have him before your eyes this moment if he had listened to me, if he had let me do Giudice's job. Well, well! God be good to him! he would not hearken to me; he knows well now that I was right."

"Never mind!" the old man struck in, "Giudice will lose nothing by waiting."

"Evviva Ors' Anton'!" and a dozen shots accompanied the acclamation.

Orso, in a very bad humour, in the centre of this group of armed riders, all thronging round him to shake him by the hand, was for some time unable to make himself heard. At last, putting on the look he used to wear at the head of his company, when he was distributing reprimands and sentences to the black-hole: "My friends," he said, "I thank you for the affection you display towards me and for that you bore my father; but mark me, I will not submit to be counselled by any one. I know my own business."

"He's right! quite right!" cried the goatherds. "You know well you may count on us."

"Yes, I know that, but I have no need of any one at present, and my house is threatened with no danger. Face about forthwith, and be off every man of you to your goats. I know the road to Pietranera, and want no guides."

"Fear nothing, Ors' Anton'," said the old man; "*they* would not dare to show themselves to-day; the mouse runs back to its hole, when the cat returns."

"Cat yourself, old whitebeard!" said Orso. "What's your name?"

"What! you don't know me, Ors' Anton', me that have

carried you so often behind me on my biting mule? You don't know Polo Griffo? A brave fellow, do you see, staunch to the Della Rebbias, body and soul. Just say the word, and when your big gun talks, this old musket, as old as its master, will not be silent; rely on that, Ors' Anton'."

"Very well, very well, but in the devil's name be off, and let us continue our journey."

The goatherds withdrew at last, setting off at a round trot for the village; but, from time to time, they stopped at every elevated point of the road, as if to examine if there was not some ambuscade, and they always kept near enough to Orso and his sister, to be able to support them in case of need. And old Polo Griffo said to his companions, "I understand him, I understand him! He does not say what he means to do, but he does it. He is the very picture of his father. Good! say you have no spite against any one! you have made a vow to St. Nega.[1] Bravo! Do you see me now, I would not give a fig for the mayor's hide; you may make a wine bag of it before a month is over."

Thus preceded by this troop of scouts, the descendant of the Della Rebbias entered his village, and approached the old manor of the Corporals, his ancestors. The Rebbianists, long without a chief, advanced in a body to meet him, and the neutral inhabitants of the village were all on their thresholds, to see him pass. The Barricinists kept within doors, and looked out through the openings of their latticed casements.

The village of Pietranera is very irregularly built, like all the others in Corsica; for, in order to see a street, you must go to Cargese, built by M. de Marbœuf. The houses, scattered at random, and without the least attempt at ranging in line, occupy the summit of a small ledge on the mountain side. About the middle of the village stands a large evergreen oak, close by

[1] The name of this saint is not to be found in the calendar. To make a vow to St. Nega is to deny a thing flatly.

is a granite basin, into which the water of a neighbouring spring is conveyed by a wooden pipe. This monument of public utility was constructed by the Della Rebbias and the Barricini at their common cost; but it would be a great mistake to behold in it a proof of the ancient harmony between the two families. On the contrary, the structure owed its existence to their jealousy. Colonel Della Rebbia, having once sent a small sum to the municipal council of his commune, as a contribution towards the erection of a fountain, the barrister Barricini hastened to present a similar donation, and it was to this combat of generosity that Pietranera was indebted for its water. Round the evergreen oak and the fountain, there is a vacant space called the Place, where idlers assemble in the evening. Sometimes they play cards there, and they dance there once a year in carnival time. At each extremity of the Place rise buildings of greater height than breadth, constructed of granite and schist. These are the hostile towers of the Della Rebbias and the Barricini. Their architecture is uniform, their height is the same, and it is obvious that the rivalry between the two families has always subsisted without receiving any decision from fortune.

It may not be amiss perhaps to explain what is to be understood by this word tower. It is a square building about forty feet high, which in any other country would be called neither more nor less than a pigeon-house. The door, which is narrow, opens eight feet above the ground, and is reached by a very steep flight of steps. Over the door is a window with a sort of balcony, having loopholes in it directed downwards, and through which one may brain a troublesome visitor without risk. Between the window and the door there are two rudely carved escutcheons. One of these formerly displayed the Genoese cross, but it is now quite mutilated and unintelligible to all but antiquarian eyes. On the other escutcheon are sculptured the arms of the family to whom the tower belongs. To complete

the decoration, add some marks of balls on the escutcheons and the window-frames, and you may picture to yourself a Corsican manor of the middle ages. I forgot to mention that the dwelling-house adjoins the tower, and is often connected with it by a subterraneous passage.

The house and tower of the Della Rebbias occupy the northern side of the Place of Pietranera, those of the Barricini, the southern side. From the northern tower to the fountain is the walk of the Della Rebbias, that of the Barricini is opposite to this. Never since the death of the colonel's wife had a member of either family been seen on any but the side assigned it by a sort of tacit convention. To avoid making a detour, Orso was about to pass before the Mayor's house, when his sister called his attention to what he was doing, and proposed that they should turn into a lane that would lead them to their own house without crossing the Place.

"Why go out of our way?" said Orso; "is not the Place free to everybody?" and he spurred his horse.

"Brave heart!" Colomba mentally ejaculated.—"Father, thou shalt be avenged!"

When they reached the place, Colomba put herself between her brother and the house of the Barricini, and kept her eye constantly fixed on the windows of her foes. She remarked that they had been recently barricaded and that "archere" had been made before them. Archere is the name given to loopholes, left between the thick blocks of wood, with which the lower parts of windows are protected when an attack is apprehended, under cover of which the inhabitants may fire upon their assailants.

"The cowards!" said Colomba. "Look, brother; they begin already to be on their guard; they barricade themselves! but they must come out some time or other!"

The appearance of Orso on the southern side of the Place produced a great sensation in Pietranera, and was regarded as

a proof of daring, amounting almost to rashness. Among the neutral parties assembled in the evening round the evergreen oak, it was made the text for endless commentaries. "It is lucky," said one, "that the young Barricini are not yet come back, for they are not so patient as the advocate, and it's a great doubt to me they would have let their enemy pass along their ground without making him pay for his bravado."

"Now mark my words, neighbour," said an old man who was the oracle of the village, "I noticed Colomba's face to-day; she has something in her head, I tell you. I smell powder in the air. Before long there will be butcher's meat cheap in Pietranera."

CHAPTER X.

SEPARATED at a very early age from his father, Orso had scarcely had time to know him thoroughly. He had left Pietranera, at fifteen, to pursue his studies in Pisa, and from thence he had gone to the Ecole Militaire, whilst Ghilfuccio was following the flight of the imperial eagles over Europe. On the continent, Orso had seen his father, but upon rare and brief occasions, and it was only in the year 1815 he served in the regiment commanded by his father. But the colonel, who was a martinet, treated his son like all the other young lieutenants, that is to say, with great strictness. The reminiscences Orso retained of him were of two kinds. He remembered him at Pietranera lending him his sword, letting him discharge his gun when he returned from shooting, or seating him, for the first time in his life, when a very little fellow, at the family table. Then he pictured to himself, Colonel Della Rebbia putting him under arrest for some indiscretion or another, and never calling him anything but "Lieutenant Della Rebbia." "Lieutenant Della Rebbia, you are not in fighting position: three days' arrest.—Your

skirmishers are fifteen feet too far from the reserve: five days' arrest.—You are in a foraging cap at five minutes past twelve: eight days' arrest." Only once, at Quatre Bras, the colonel said to him, "Very well done, Orso! but prudence!" Yet after all, these last reminiscences were not those which Pietranera called up in his mind. The sight of the familiar scenes of boyhood, the household goods used by his mother, whom he had fondly loved, excited a host of sweet and painful emotions in his breast; then the gloomy future preparing for him, the vague uneasiness caused him by his sister, and, above all, the thought that Miss Nevil was about to visit his dwelling, which now struck him as so mean, so paltry, and so unsuited to persons used to the comforts and elegances of this life; the contempt with which it would, perhaps, inspire her; all these thoughts made a chaos in his brain, and had the most depressing effect on his spirits.

He sat down to supper in a large oaken arm-chair, blackened by age, in which his father used to head the family table, and smiled as he saw Colomba hesitate to be seated with him. He was grateful to her, however, for her silence during the repast, and for her speedy retirement after it; for he felt himself too much agitated to resist the attacks she was, no doubt, preparing for him; but Colomba wished to proceed by easy steps with him, and to give him time to look about him. He remained a long while in one posture, with his head upon his hand, running over, in his mind, the events of the last fortnight. He saw, with dismay, the eager expectation with which every one seemed to look forward to his conduct with respect to the Barricini. Already he perceived that the opinion of Pietranera was beginning to be for him the opinion of the world. It was incumbent on him to revenge himself, if he would not pass for a dastard. But on whom? He could not believe the Barricini guilty of murder. To be sure they were the enemies of his family, but nothing short of the gross prejudices of his countrymen could fix upon them the imputation of assassination. At times he gazed on

Miss Nevil's talisman, and whispered to himself its motto, "Life is a combat!" At last, he said, resolutely, "I will conquer in that combat!" And, reinvigorated by this good thought, he rose, took his lamp and was proceeding to his bedroom, when some one knocked at the house-door. It was an unseasonable hour for receiving visitors. Colomba immediately appeared, followed by the servant woman. "It is nothing," she said, as she ran to the door. Nevertheless, before she opened, she asked who was there. A soft voice replied, "It is I." Upon this the wooden bar that crossed the door was immediately removed, and Colomba returned to the sitting-room followed by a little girl about ten years old, bare-footed, in rags, with her head wrapped in an old worn kerchief, from beneath which long locks of hair, black as the raven's wing, fell down upon her neck. The child was thin, pale, and sunburnt; but her eyes sparkled with intelligence. Seeing Orso, she stopped short, timidly, and bobbed him a curtsey in peasant fashion; she then whispered Colomba, and handed her a pheasant recently shot.

"Thank you, Chili," said Colomba; "thank your uncle for me. He is well, I hope?"

"Very well, mademoiselle, at your service. I could not come sooner, for he was very late. I stayed three hours in the mâquis waiting for him."

"You have not had your supper?"

"No, mademoiselle, I had not time."

"You shall have some. Has your uncle any bread left?"

"Not much, mademoiselle; but powder is what he wants most. We have got the chestnuts now, and so all he wants at present is powder."

"I will give you a loaf for him and some powder. Tell him to be saving of it, for it is dear."

"Colomba," said Orso in French, "to whom are you giving alms in this way?"

"To a poor bandit of our village," Colomba replied, in the same language. "This little thing is his niece."

"It strikes me you might bestow your charity better. Why send powder to a rascal who will only make use of it for criminal purposes? But for the deplorable weakness with which every body here seems to lean to the bandits, Corsica would have been cleared of them long ago."

"The worst people in the country are not those who have taken to the hillside."[1]

"Give them bread if you will, it should not be refused to any one; but I have no notion of your giving them ammunition."

"Brother," said Colomba, gravely, "you are master here, and everything in the house belongs to you; but I tell you plainly I will give my silk veil to this little girl to sell, rather than refuse powder to a bandit. Refuse him powder! Why, you might as well give him up at once to the gendarmes. What protection has he against them except his cartridges?"

Meanwhile the little girl was eagerly devouring a piece of bread, and turning a keen glance alternately on Colomba and her brother, as she strove to guess the meaning of their words from the expression of their features.

"And what may he have done, this bandit of yours? For what crime has he fled to the mâquis?"

"Brandolaccio has committed no crime," said Colomba emphatically. "He killed Giovan' Opizzo, who had assassinated his father whilst Brandolaccio was abroad with the army."

Orso turned round, took up his lamp, and went to his bedroom without saying a word. Colomba then gave powder and provisions to the child and let her out of doors again, repeating to her, "Above all, tell your uncle to watch well over Orso."

[1] Who are *alla campagna*—that is, who are bandits. Bandit is not an ignominious term; it is understood in the sense of banished, and is equivalent to the "outlaw" of the English ballads.

CHAPTER XI.

It was long before Orso fell asleep, consequently he awoke the next morning at a very late hour, at least for a Corsican. No sooner had he got out of bed, than the first object that met his eyes was the house of his enemies, and the loopholes they had set up. He went down stairs and asked after his sister. "She is in the kitchen casting balls," replied the servant Saveria. Thus he could not move a step without being pursued by the image of war.

He found Colomba seated on a stool, with several newly cast balls before her, busied in trimming off the projections left by the opening in the mould. "What the deuce are you doing there?" her brother asked her.

"You had no balls for the colonel's gun," she answered with her sweet voice; "I have found a mould of the proper size, and you shall have four and twenty cartridges this very day, brother."

"I have no need of them, thank God!"

"One must never be short, Ors' Anton'. You have forgotten your country and the sort of people you have around you."

"No fear of my forgetting it for long with you at my elbow. Tell me, you received a large trunk some days ago, did you not?"

"Yes, brother. Shall I take it up to your room?"

"You take it up! Why, you could never lift it. Is there no man about the place to do it?"

"I am not so weak as you suppose," said Colomba, tucking up her sleeves, and displaying a white and beautifully rounded arm, but one that bespoke no common strength. "Come, Saveria," she said to the servant, "help me." She was about

raising the heavy trunk by herself, when Orso hastened to assist her.

"There is something in this trunk for you, my dear Colomba," he said. "You will excuse me for making you such poor presents, but the purse of a half-pay lieutenant is not over well furnished." As he spoke he opened the trunk, and took from it some dresses, a shawl, and other articles of female costume.

"What beautiful things," cried Colomba, "I must make haste and put them away, for fear they should get spoiled. I will keep them for my wedding," she added, with a melancholy smile, "for at present I am in mourning," and she kissed her brother's hand.

"It looks like affectation, my dear sister, to continue so long in mourning."

"I have vowed it," said Colomba, firmly, "I will not put off my mourning—" And she looked at the windows of the Barricini.

"Till the day you are married," said Orso, wishing to prevent her finishing the phrase.

"I will not marry," said Colomba, "any but the man who shall have done three things," and her eyes were still bent loweringly on the house of her foes.

"I wonder, Colomba, such a fine girl as you are, that you are not married before this. Come, you must tell me who is courting you; besides, I shall be sure to hear the serenades. They must be choice ones to please a great voceratrice like you."

"Who would take a poor orphan?—And then, the man for whom I put off my mourning, shall make the women yonder put on theirs."

This is running into insanity, thought Orso to himself, but he made no reply, in order to avoid all argument.

"Brother," said Colomba, coaxingly, "I have also something to offer you. The clothes you have on are too fine for this country; your handsome frock-coat would be all in pieces in two days, if you went into the mâquis with it; you must keep

it for when Miss Nevil comes." Then opening a press, she took out a complete sporting suit. "I have made you a velveteen jacket, and here is a cap, such as our beaux wear. I worked it for you long ago. Will you try it on?"

So saying, she made him put on a loose jacket of green velveteen, with a huge pocket in the back; and she placed on his head a pointed cap of black velvet, embroidered with black silk and jet, and terminating in a sort of tuft.

"Here is our father's 'carchera;'[1] the stiletto is in the pocket of your jacket. I will go and fetch the pistol."

"I look for all the world like a brigand in one of the minor theatres," said Orso, contemplating his figure in a small looking-glass Saveria held before him.

"Well, if you are not just the real thing now, Ors' Anton'," said the old servant; "the finest 'pinsuto'[2] of Bocognano or Bastelica, does not cut a handsomer figure!"

Orso breakfasted in his new costume. During the repast, he told his sister that his trunk contained a certain number of books, and that it was his intention to send for others to France and Italy, and to make her study hard. "For it is a shame, Colomba, that a great girl like you should be ignorant of things the children on the continent learn almost as soon as they are out of the nurse's arms."

"You are right, brother," said Colomba, "I am very well aware of my deficiencies, and I shall be very glad to learn, especially if you will be kind enough to instruct me."

Some days passed without Colomba once uttering the name of Barricini. She was assiduous in all little offices of kindness towards her brother, and frequently talked to him of Miss Nevil. Orso made her read French and Italian books to him, and he

[1] *Carchera*—the belt in which cartridges are carried; a pistol is stuck in it on the left side.

[2] *Pinsuto*—the name given to those who wear the pointed cap, *barreta pinsuta*.

was astonished sometimes at the shrewdness and good sense of her observations, sometimes at her profound ignorance of the commonest things.

One morning after breakfast Colomba left the room for a moment, and instead of returning with a book and paper, she made her appearance wearing her veil. Her aspect was even more than usually grave. "Brother," she said, "pray come out with me."

"Where do you wish me to go with you?" asked Orso, offering her his arm.

"I do not want your arm, brother; but take your gun and your cartridge-belt. A man ought never to go out of doors without his arms."

"With all my heart! One must conform to the fashion. Where are we going?"

Colomba made no answer, but drew her veil close round her, called the watch-dog, and left the house, followed by her brother. Leaving the village rapidly behind her, she struck into a hollow way, winding among the vineyards, having first sent forward the dog, after making a sign to him. The dog seemed fully to understand her, for he immediately set off in a zigzag, running in among the vines right and left, always keeping fifty paces ahead of his mistress, and sometimes stopping in the middle of the road, and looking before him, wagging his tail. He seemed to perform the duties of a scout in the very best style.

"If Muschetto barks," said Colomba, "cock your gun, brother, and stand still."

When they had proceeded, with many windings, about half a mile from the village, Colomba stopped suddenly at a place where there was an abrupt bend in the road. In that spot rose a small pyramid of branches, some green, some withered, heaped up to the height of about three feet. Out of its summit protruded the extremity of a wooden cross, painted black. In many cantons of Corsica, especially in the mountains, an ex-

tremely ancient custom, connected, perhaps, with the superstitions of paganism, obliges the passers-by to throw a stone or a branch of a tree on the spot where a man has fallen by a violent death. For many a year, so long as the memory of the victim's tragical end remains in the memory of men, this singular offering thus grows from day to day. It is called the "heap," the "mucchio" of such a one.

Colomba stopped before this heap, and, breaking a branch from an arbutus, she cast it on the pyramid. "Orso," she said, "it was here our father died. Let us pray, brother, for his soul!" and she fell on her knees. Orso instantly did the same. At that moment the village-bell tolled slowly, for a man had died during the night. Orso burst into tears.

After a few minutes Colomba rose up with dry eyes, but an excited countenance. She hastily made with her thumb the sign of the cross familiar to her countrymen, and which is the usual accompaniment of their solemn vows; then hurrying her brother along, she retraced the way to the village. They returned to their house in silence. Orso went up to his bedroom. A moment afterwards Colomba followed him, carrying in her hand a small box, which she laid on the table. She opened it, and drew out a shirt covered with broad stains of blood.

"Here is your father's shirt, Orso;" and she laid it on his lap.—"Here is the lead that struck him;" and she placed two corroded balls on the shirt.

"Orso, my brother!" she cried, falling on his breast, and pressing him intensely in her arms; "Orso! you will avenge him!" She kissed him with a sort of frenzy, pressed the balls and the shirt to her lips, and rushed from the room, leaving her brother petrified on his chair.

Orso remained some moments without motion, not daring to put away those appalling relics. At last, mastering his feelings by a violent effort, he put them back in the box, and ran and threw himself on his bed at the opposite end of the room,

where he lay, with his face towards the wall and buried in his pillow, as though he would shut out the sight of a spectre from his eyes. His sister's last words rang incessantly in his ears, and it seemed as though he heard the voice of a fatal, inevitable oracle calling to him for blood—for innocent blood. I will not attempt to describe the thoughts of the unhappy young man, as bewildered as those that riot in the brain of a madman. He remained long in the same position, not daring to turn his head round. At last he rose, closed the box, dashed out of doors, and hurried forwards into the country, running he knew not whither.

By degrees, the open air acted soothingly upon him; he grew calmer, and examined his position and the means of escaping from it with some degree of coolness. He did not suspect the Barricini of murder, as the reader is already aware; but he accused them of having trumped up the forged letter in the bandit Agostini's name; and that letter he believed, at least, had caused his father's death. To prosecute them for forgery, he felt was out of the question. At times, if the prejudices or the instincts of his country beset him, and suggested to him an easy vengeance at the turn of a path, he cast the idea from him with horror, as he thought of his comrades in the regiment, of the *salons* of Paris, above all, of Miss Nevil. Then he pondered over his sister's reproaches, and all the Corsican that lingered in his nature justified those reproaches, and gave them more poignant bitterness. One hope alone remained to him in this conflict between his conscience and his prejudices; this was to pick a quarrel with one of the mayor's sons, no matter how, which should lead to a duel. To kill him with a ball or a sword-thrust in fair fight, was an idea that put his Corsican and his French notions in harmony with each other. The expedient approved of, and pondering how it might be executed, he began to feel himself relieved from a heavy load; and it was not long before other and gentler thoughts contributed further to allay his feverish agitation. Cicero, sunk in woe by the loss of his

daughter Tullia, forgot his grief in turning over in his mind all the fine things he could say on the subject. By similar dissertations on life and death, Mr. Shandy consoled himself for the loss of his son. Orso refreshed his spirits by thinking how he might lay before Miss Nevil a picture of the state of his inward man—a picture which could not fail powerfully to interest that lovely being.

He was making his way back to the village, from which he had unconsciously strayed, when he heard a little girl, who doubtless thought herself alone, singing in a path on the borders of the mâquis. The tune was that slow and momentous one, consecrated to funeral lamentations, and the little girl was singing,

"And when my son, now far away, shall seek his home once more,
Give him his murder'd father's cross, this shirt stiff with his gore."

"What is that you are singing, little girl?" said Orso in an angry voice, as he suddenly stood before her.

"Is it you, Ors' Anton'?" said the child somewhat frightened. "It is a song of Mademoiselle Colomba's."

"I forbid you to sing it," said Orso in a terrible voice.

The child, turning her head right and left, seemed looking about for some way of escape; and she would no doubt have taken to her heels, but for her anxiety about a large parcel that lay on the grass at her feet.

Orso was ashamed of his violence. "What have you got there in your bundle, my little lass?" he asked her as gently as he could. And as the child hesitated to reply, he raised the cloth wrapper, and saw that the bundle contained a loaf and other provisions.

"To whom are you carrying this bread, my dear?" he said.

"Oh, you know, sir—to my uncle."

"Your uncle is a bandit, is he not?"

"At your service, Monsieur Ors' Anton'."

"If the gendarmes met you they would ask you where you were going."

"I would tell them," the child answered promptly, "that I am carrying food to the Lucchesi who are cutting the mâquis."

"And if some hungry hunter fell in with you, and took it into his head to dine at your expense and take your provisions from you!"

"He durst not. I would tell him it is for my uncle."

"Well, he's not the man to let his dinner be taken from him very quietly. He is very fond of you; this uncle of yours?"

"Oh! yes, Ors' Anton'. Since my father died he has taken care of the family, of my mother, myself, and my little sister. Before mother was ill he spoke a good word for her to the rich folks that they might give her work. The mayor gives me a frock every year, and the curé teaches me reading and the catechism since my uncle spoke to them. But there's nobody so good to us after all as your sister."

At this moment a dog appeared on the path. The little girl, putting two fingers to her mouth, whistled shrilly; the dog instantly ran up and saluted her with lively demonstrations of canine affection, and then darted back again into the mâquis. Presently two men, badly dressed but well armed, appeared behind a hedge row of vines at a few paces distance from Orso. One would have thought they had made their way to the spot where they stood by creeping like snakes through the thick cover of cystus and myrtle.

"Oh! Ors' Anton', welcome home," said the elder of the two men. "What, you don't recognise me?"

"No," said Orso, looking steadfastly at him.

"Well, it's queer how a beard and a pointed cap alter a man. Look again, lieutenant. Have you forgotten the veterans of Waterloo? Don't you remember Brando Savelli, who bit many a cartridge by your side on that woful day?"

"What! is it you?" said Orso. "You deserted in 1816?"

"Just so, lieutenant. One gets tired of the service, you see; and then I had an account to settle in this country. Aha! Chili, you're a brave lass. Out with the prog quickly, for we are hungry. You have no idea, lieutenant, what an appetite these mâquis give one. Who sent us this? Mademoiselle Colomba or the mayor?"

"No, uncle; it was the miller's wife gave me this for you, and a quilt for mother."

"What does she want of me?"

"She says the Lucchesi she hired to grub up the ground are standing out now for thirty-five sous and the chestnuts, on account of the fever that exists down below Pietranera."

"The lazy rascals! I'll see to it. Will you join us at dinner without ceremony, lieutenant? We have made worse meals together in the time of our poor countryman they have superseded."

"Excuse me, I am extremely obliged to you. They have superseded me too as you say; they have put me on half-pay."

"Ay, so I heard. But you did not take that much to heart, I warrant. An account to settle on your part too, I take it. Come, curé," said the bandit to his companion, "to table with you. Monsieur Orso, let me introduce M. le Curé to you; at least, I don't exactly know that he is a curé, but he has the learning."

"A poor student in theology, monsieur," said the second bandit, "whom they have hindered from following out his vocation. Who knows? I might perhaps have been pope, Brandolaccio."

"What chance has deprived the church of your enlightened services?" Orso inquired.

"A mere nothing—an account to settle, as my friend Brandolaccio says, a sister of mine who had played the fool while I was devouring black letter in the university of Pisa. I was obliged to come home to marry her. But her intended made

too much haste, and died of fever three days before my arrival. Thereupon I applied, as you, monsieur, would have done in my place, to the brother of the defunct. They told me he was married. What was to be done?"

"Why, really the case was puzzling. What did you do?"

"This is one of those cases in which you must resort to the flint."

"That is to say"—

"I lodged a ball in his head," said the bandit coolly.

Orso was horrorstruck. Curiosity, however, and perhaps also a wish to postpone his return home, made him remain where he was and continue the conversation with the two men, each of whom had at least one murder on his conscience.

Whilst his comrade was talking, Brandolaccio set some bread and meat before him; he helped himself, and then took care of his dog, whom he introduced to Orso by the name of Brusco, as an animal endowed with the marvellous instinctive faculty of distinguishing a soldier under any disguise whatever. Finally he cut off a piece of bread and a slice of raw ham, which he handed to his niece.

"What a charming life is the bandit's!" exclaimed the theological student, after swallowing a few mouthfuls. "You will perhaps make a trial of it one of these days, M. Della Rebbia, and you will see how delightful it is to know no master but one's own caprice." Up to this point the bandit had spoken Italian; he now went on to say in French, "Corsica is not a very amusing country for a young man; but for a bandit—oh! it is quite another sort of thing. The women are fairly crazed for us. Just as you see me, I have three mistresses in three different cantons. I am everywhere at home. And what's more, one of them is the wife of a gendarme."

"You know a great many languages, monsieur," said Orso, gravely.

"I speak French, because you know '*Maxima debetur pueris*

reverentia.' We are determined, Brandolaccio and I, that the little one shall turn out well."

"When she comes to be fifteen," said Chilina's uncle, "I will marry her advantageously. I have a match in my eye for her."

"Then the proposal will come from you," said Orso.

"Certainly. Do you think that if I say to some snug fellow or another in these parts, I, Brando Savelli, would be glad to see your son marry Michelina Savelli, do you think he'll turn the bothered ear to the proposal?"

"I should not advise him," said the other bandit; "my comrade has rather a heavy hand of his own."

"If I were a scamp," continued Brandolaccio, "a blackguard, a lord-knows-who, I need only open my wallet, and the five franc pieces would fall into it in showers."

"There is something in your wallet then that attracts them?" said Orso.

"Not at all. But if I were to write, as some have done, to a rich man—'I want a hundred francs'—he would send them to me in double quick time. But, lieutenant, I am a man of honour."

"Would you believe it, M. Della Rebbia," said the bandit, whom his comrade called the curé, "would you believe it that even in this primitive and unsophisticated land there are, nevertheless, some miscreants who take advantage of the high consideration we acquire by means of our passports" (pointing to his gun) "to draw forged bills of exchange in our name?"

"Very likely," said Orso, bluntly. "But what do you mean by bills of exchange?"

"Six months ago," continued the bandit, "I was walking along, down by Orezza yonder, when a bumpkin comes up to me, pulls off his cap a long way off, and says, "Ah! monsieur le curé (they always call me so), 'do excuse me, give me time, I have only been able to get together fifty-five francs; but indeed, it was all I could raise.' Well, I was quite sur-

prised at this. What's that you say, you scoundrel! fifty-five francs? said I. 'I mean sixty-five,' says he; 'but as for the hundred you demand of me it is clean impossible.' What, you blackguard! I demand a hundred francs? I don't know you. Upon this he hands me a dirty scrap of a letter ordering him to deposit a hundred francs in a certain place, on pain of having his house burned, and his cows killed by Giocanto Castriconi, that is my name. The infamous villains had forged my signature! What provoked me the most was that the letter was written in patois, and full of mistakes in spelling.—I make mistakes in spelling! I, who carried off all the prizes in the university! I gave the blackguard a box on the ear to begin with, that made him spin round twice on his axis. What, you rascal, you take me for a robber, do you? And with that I gave him a kick in a certain place that shall be nameless. This eased my mind a little, and I said to him, When are you to take this money to the appointed place? 'This very day.' Good! go and take it there. It was at the foot of a pine, and there was no mistaking the spot. The fellow takes the money, buries it at the foot of the tree, and comes back to me. I had ensconced myself in the vicinity. I waited there with my man six mortal hours. M. Della Rebbia, I would have waited three days had it been necessary. At the end of six hours appears a Bastiaccio,[1] an infamous usurer. He stoops down to gather up the money,—bang! I let fly at him, and with such good aim that he pitched head foremost upon the silver pieces he was picking up. Now you blackguard, said I to the peasant, take back your money, and never take it into your head again to suspect Giocanto Castriconi of a dirty action. The poor devil, shaking from head to foot, swept up his sixty-five francs and

[1] The Corsican mountaineers detest the inhabitants of Bastia, whom they do not regard as fellow-countrymen. They never say *Bastiese*, but *Bastiaccio:* the termination, *accio*, it is well known, is usually indicative of contempt.

never stopped to wipe them. He thanked me, I gave him a swinging good kick by way of adieu, and off he cut."

"Ah! curé," said Brandolaccio, "I envy you that shot. What a jolly good laugh you must have had!"

"The ball struck the Bastiaccio in the temple," continued the bandit, "and that put me in mind of these lines of Virgil—

——Liquefacto tempora plumbo
Diffidit, ac multâ porrectum extendit arenâ.

Liquefacto! Is it your opinion, Monsieur Orso, that a leaden ball melts by the rapidity of its passage through the air? You, who have studied the science of projectiles, can, no doubt, inform me whether this is an error or an ascertained fact?"

Orso was better pleased to discuss the question of physics, than to argue with the curé on the morality of his action. Brandolaccio, who did not find much to amuse him in this scientific discourse, interrupted it with the remark that the sun was about to set. "Since you would not dine with us, Ors' Anton'," he said, "I advise you not to keep Mademoiselle Colomba waiting any longer. Besides, it is not always wholesome to be roaming about after sunset. Why do you leave the house without a gun? There are bad people hereabouts; take care of yourself. For this day you have nothing to fear; the Barricini are bringing the prefect home with them; they met him on the road, and he is to stop a day at Pietranera, on his way to lay a first stone, as they say—stupid nonsense! He sleeps to-night at the house of the Barricini, but to-morrow they will be free. There's Vincentello, and a bad chap he is, and Orlanduccio, not much better.—Try to light upon them separately, to-day one, to-morrow the other, but keep a sharp look out, that's all."

"Thank you for the advice," said Orso, "but we have nothing to do with each other: till they come after me of their own accord, I have nothing to say to them."

The bandit made a click with his tongue, and stuck it in his cheek, but said nothing. Orso got up to go away. "By the way," said Brandolaccio, "I have not thanked you for your powder. It came just in the nick of time. At present I am in want of nothing;—that is to say, I want a pair of shoes still, but I will make myself a pair out of the skin of a mouflon one of these days."

Orso slipped two five-franc pieces into the bandit's hand. "It was Colomba sent you the powder. Here is something to buy you the shoes."

"No nonsense, lieutenant," cried Brandolaccio, returning the two coins. "Do you take me for a beggar? I accept bread and powder, but I will take nothing else."

"Between old soldiers, I thought one might help one another. Well, good-bye." But, before going away, he contrived to drop the money into the bandit's wallet unnoticed.

"Good-bye, Ors' Anton'," said the theologian. "We shall meet again, perhaps, in the mâquis one of these days, and resume our studies of Virgil."

Orso had parted about a quarter of an hour from his worthy acquaintances, when he heard a man running after him at full speed. It was Brandolaccio.

"It is a little too bad, lieutenant," he cried, panting for breath, "a little too bad. Here are your ten francs. From anybody else I would not put up with the trick. My respects to Mademoiselle Colomba. You have quite blown me. Good evening."

CHAPTER XII.

Orso found Colomba in some alarm at his long absence; but on his safe return she resumed that look of melancholy serenity which was habitual with her. At their evening meal they talked only on indifferent matters, and Orso, emboldened by his sister's apparent calmness, told her of his encounter with the bandits, and even ventured on some jocular criticisms upon the moral and religious education little Chilina was receiving at the hands of her uncle and of his honourable colleague, Signor Castriconi.

"Brandolaccio is a well-conducted man," said Colomba; "but as for Castriconi, I have heard that he is a man of immoral character."

"I believe," said Orso, "that he is quite as good a man as Brandolaccio, and Brandolaccio as good as he. They are both the one and the other at open war with society. A first crime drives them daily into others: yet, after all, they are perhaps not so criminal as many a man who does not sleep in the mâquis."

A flash of joy lighted up his sister's face.

"Yes," continued Orso, "these wretches have some sense of honour, after their own fashion. It is the force of a cruel prejudice, and not a sordid cupidity that has plunged them into the life they are leading."

There was a moment's silence.

"Brother," said Colomba, as she poured out his coffee; "you are aware, perhaps, that Gianetto Pietri died last night? He died of the marsh fever."

"Who was he, this Pietri?"

"A man of our village, the husband of that Madeleine who received the pocket-book from our father in his last moments. The widow has been here to beg I would go to the wake and sing something. It will be proper that you come too. They are neighbours, and it is an act of courtesy indispensable in a small locality like ours."

"Confound the wake! Colomba. I don't like to see my sister making a public exhibition of herself."

"Orso," replied Colomba, "every people has its own way of paying honour to its dead. The ballata has come down to us from our ancestors, and we ought to respect it as an ancient usage. Madeleine has not the gift, and old Fiordispina, the best voceratrice in the country, is ill. There is no doing without some one for the ballata."

"Do you imagine Gianetto will not find his way in the other world unless some one sings doggerel lines over his bier? Go to the wake if you will, Colomba; I will go with you, if you think I ought; but do not improvise; it is not becoming at your age, and—now pray don't, sister."

"I have, promised brother. You know it is the custom here, and I repeat, there is no one except myself to improvise."

"What a stupid custom!"

"I suffer greatly from singing in this way. It reminds me of all our misfortunes. I shall be ill from the effects of it to-morrow, but it cannot be helped. Give me leave, brother. Remember you bade me improvise at Ajaccio, to please that young English lady, who turns our old customs into ridicule. May I not improvise to-morrow for poor people, who will thank me for it, and whom it will help to bear their affliction?"

"Well, well, do as you please. I will lay a wager you have already composed your ballata, and do not like to lose it."

"No; I could not compose it beforehand, brother. I set myself before the dead man, and I think of those that are left

behind. The tears start into my eyes, and then I sing whatever comes into my head."

All this was spoken with so much simplicity that it was impossible to suspect Signora Colomba of the least poetical vanity. Orso yielded, and accompanied his sister to the house of the Pietri family. The corpse lay with the face uncovered on a table in the largest room of the house. The doors and windows were open and several tapers were burning round the table. The widow of the deceased was at his head, and behind her a great number of females filled all one side of the room; on the other the men were drawn up, standing with their heads uncovered, their eyes fixed on the corpse in deep silence. Every new comer as he entered went up to the table, embraced the dead man,[1] bent his head to the widow and the son of the deceased, and then took his place among the bystanders without uttering a word. From time to time, however, a solitary voice broke the solemn silence and addressed some words to the departed.

"Why did you leave your good wife?" said an old man. "Did she not take good care of you? What were you in want of? Why did you not wait one month longer? Your daughter-in-law would have given you a son."

A tall young man, Pietri's son, clasping his father's cold hand, ejaculated, "Oh! why did you not die by the *mala morte*?[2] We would have avenged you!"

These were the first words Orso heard as he entered the room. The group of mourners opened to make way for him, and a low murmur of curiosity bespoke the interest excited by the presence of the voceratrice. Colomba embraced the widow, took her hands in hers, and remained some minutes in thought, with her eyes bent on the ground. Then throwing back her veil she gazed steadfastly on the face of the dead man, and lean-

[1] This custom is still retained at Bocognano.

[2] *La mala morte*—death by violence.

ing over the body, that was scarcely more pale than herself, she began thus:

"Now, fare thee well, Gianetto! Saints and angels take thy soul!
To live is but to suffer. Thou hast hied thee to that goal,
Where neither sun nor frost is felt. Thy tasks are ended now:
Thou need'st no more or bill, or axe, or heavy mattock: thou
Hast left a world of toil and care to dwell among the blest;
And every day is now for thee a sabbath-day of rest.
Farewell, Gianetto! Angels take thy soul into their keeping!
Thy son rules in thy house. I've seen the hot *libeccio* sweeping
The parched breast of the hills, the oak, the goodly oak lay low.
I thought it dead: I came again, and saw a young shoot grow
All freshly from its ancient root; the shoot became a tree,
And pleasant was its ample shade, its leafy crown to see.
Look, Maddelè, its sturdy boughs how well they roof thee o'er!
Rest in its shade, and think upon the oak that is no more."

Here Madeleine began to sob aloud; and two or three men who at another time would have shot down Christians as coolly as partridges, took to wiping the big tears from their swarthy cheeks.

Colomba went on in the same strain for some time, now apostrophizing the deceased, now his family, and occasionally, by a prosopopœia common in ballata composition, making the dead man speak in person to console his friends, or to give them advice. As her improvisation proceeded the expression of her features grew sublime; her complexion became tinged with a transparent rose-colour, that enhanced the brilliant whiteness of her teeth, and the lustre of her dilated pupils. 'Twas the Pythoness upon her tripod. Save now and then a sigh or a stifled sob, not the slightest murmur escaped the crowd that pressed round her. Though peculiarly steeled against this poetry of savage life, Orso soon found himself infected with the contagious emotions of those about him. Concealed in a dark corner of the room, his tears fell as fast as those of Pietri's son.

Suddenly a slight movement was perceptible among the

listening throng: the circle opened, and several strangers entered. It was evident from the respect shown them, and the eagerness to make way for them, that they were persons of importance, whose presence conferred special honour on the house; out of respect, however, for the ballata, no one spoke to the new comers. The individual who was foremost among them seemed about forty. His black coat, his red ribbon, and the expression of authority and confidence stamped upon his features, made it easy to guess at once that he was the prefect. Behind him walked an old man with a stooping figure and bilious complexion, whose timorous and uneasy glances were imperfectly concealed by his green spectacles. He wore a black coat too large for him, and which, though still new, had evidently been made many years before. He kept so close to the prefect, that one might have fancied he was striving to hide in his shadow. Lastly, after him came two tall young men, with sunburnt features, half-hidden by their bushy whiskers, their looks were haughty and disdainful, and they stared about them with insolent curiosity. Orso had been long enough abroad to have forgotten the features of the people of his village; but the sight of the old man in the spectacles instantly awakened old recollections in his mind. His presence in attendance on the prefect was enough to identify him. It was the barrister Barricini, the mayor of Pietranera, who came with his two sons to afford the prefect the spectacle of a ballata. It would not be easy to define what took place in Orso's mind at that moment; at any rate, the presence of his father's enemy caused him a sort of horror, and he felt himself more than ever accessible to the suspicions against which he had so long struggled.

As for Colomba, the moment she beheld the man to whom she had vowed a deadly hatred, her flexible features put on a stern and lowering aspect; she turned pale; her voice grew hoarse, and the half-uttered line died away on her lips. But presently, resuming her ballata, she burst out again with sudden vehemence:

"Before his desolated nest the falcon mourns, and lo!
The coward starlings flutter round exulting o'er his woe."

Here a sound of suppressed laughter was heard in the room; it proceeded from the two young men who had last come in; no doubt they thought the metaphor overstrained.

"The falcon will awake anon; he will spread his wings and soar,
And swooping down with lightning speed, dye his sharp beak in gore!
—And now, Gianetto, once again our last fond farewell take:
Enough thy friends have mourned, enough their tears flow'd for thy sake.
Alone the orphan weeps thee not: but wherefore should she shed
One tear for thee who, full of days, with loved ones round thy bed,
Prepared to meet the Eternal Judge, has softly fallen asleep?
'Tis for her murder'd sire alone the orphan'd maid may weep;
With felon shot, dealt from behind, struck down by dastards vile,
Her gallant sire, whose blood is red beneath the green-wood pile.
But gathering up the precious drops, she hath cast them in Heaven's sight
O'er Pietranera's walls, to be a sign of doom and blight.
And dire on Pietranera rests that baptism till the day
When guilty blood shall wash the stain of guiltless blood away!"

Thus ending her improvisation, Colomba sank upon a chair, and hiding her face in her mezzaro, sobbed aloud. The women, all in tears, clustered round her; many of the men cast fierce glances at the mayor and his sons, and some old men muttered their indignation at the scandal they had occasioned by their presence. The son of the deceased forced his way through the crowd, and was about to request the mayor to quit the premises with all speed; but old Barricini did not wait for the hint. He was shuffling to the door, and his two sons were already outside it. The prefect addressed a few words of condolence to young Pietri, and almost instantly followed his friends. As for Orso, he went up to his sister, took her by the arm, and hurried her out of the room. "Go with them," said young Pietri to some of his friends. "See that no harm happens to them!" Two or three young men hastily slipped their stilettoes up their left sleeves, and escorted Orso and his sister to their own door.

CHAPTER XIII.

PANTING and exhausted, Colomba was unable to utter a word. Her head lay on her brother's shoulder, and she held one of his hands tightly grasped in both her own. Though in his heart but little obliged to her for her peroration, Orso was too much alarmed to breathe a word of reproach. He was silently awaiting the termination of the nervous paroxysm she seemed labouring under, when there was a knock at the door, and Saveria entered the room with a very scared look, announcing M. le préfet! Upon hearing the name, Colomba raised herself up as if ashamed of her weakness, and stood erect, supporting herself with the back of a chair that shook visibly under her hand.

The prefect opened the conversation with some commonplace apologies for the unseasonable hour of his visit, regretted Mademoiselle Colomba's indisposition, spoke of the danger of violent emotions, censured the practice of these funeral lamentations, which the very talents of the voceratrice rendered more painful to the bystanders, and dexterously insinuated a slight reproval of the tendency of the recent improvisation. Then changing his tone, "M. Della Rebbia," he said, "I am charged by your English friends with many compliments to you on their part. Miss Nevil sends her best regards to your sister. I have a letter for you from that lady."

"A letter from Miss Nevil?" exclaimed Orso.

"Unluckily I have not got it about me, but you shall have it in five minutes. Her father has been ill. We feared for a while that he had caught one of our dreadful fevers. But I am

happy to say he is safe and sound again, as you shall judge for yourself, for it will not be long, I imagine, before you see him."

"Miss Nevil must have been sadly alarmed?"

"Fortunately she was not aware of the danger till it was already past. M. Della Rebbia, Miss Nevil has spoken a great deal to me of you and your sister." Orso bowed. "She has a great regard for you both. Under a most fascinating exterior, under an appearance of thoughtless gaiety, she conceals a rare stock of shrewd good sense."

"She is a charming person," said Orso.

"It is almost at her entreaty I am here, monsieur. No one is better acquainted than I with a melancholy history which I would gladly refrain from recalling to your recollection. Since M. Barricini is still mayor of Pietranera, and I prefect of this department, I need not tell you what account I make of certain suspicions, which, if I am not misinformed, some imprudent persons have communicated to you, and which, as I am well aware, you have repudiated with the indignation to be expected from your position and your character."

"Colomba," said Orso, fidgeting on his chair, "you are greatly fatigued. You had better go to bed." Colomba shook her head dissentingly. She had recovered her usual appearance of equanimity, and was gazing intently in the prefect's face.

"M. Barricini," continued the latter, "would most earnestly desire to see an end put to this sort of hostility—that is to say, to this state of uncertainty in which you stand with respect to each other. For my part, I should be delighted to see you on those terms with him which ought to subsist between persons naturally entitled to each other's esteem."

"Monsieur," said Orso in an agitated voice, "I have never accused Barricini of having assassinated my father; but he has done an act that will for ever prevent my holding any intercourse with him. He forged a threatening letter in the name of a certain bandit—at least he furtively attributed it to my

father. That letter in fine, monsieur, was probably the indirect cause of my father's death."

The prefect pondered a moment. "That your father should have thought so when, carried away by his natural impetuosity, he was litigating with M. Barricini, that, monsieur, I can very well understand; but in your case there is no excuse for any such delusion. Do but consider that M. Barricini had no interest in forging that letter—I say nothing of his character—you do not know him, you are prejudiced against him—but, surely you do not imagine that a man acquainted with the laws—"

"But, monsieur," said Orso, rising, "be pleased to recollect, that to tell me the letter in question was not the work of M. Barricini, is tantamount to ascribing it to my father. His honour, monsieur, is mine."

"No one, monsieur," replied the prefect, "is more fully convinced of the honour of Colonel Della Rebbia than I—but the author of the letter is now known."

"Who?" cried Colomba, stepping up to the prefect.

"A miscreant, guilty of many crimes—crimes of that sort which you Corsicans do not forgive—a robber, one Tomaso Bianchi, now lying in prison at Bastia, has confessed that he was the author of that fatal letter."

"I do not know the man," said Orso. "What can have been his motive?"

"He is a man of this country," said Colomba, "the brother of a former miller of ours. He is a bad man, and a liar unworthy of belief."

"You shall see," continued the prefect, "what interest he had in the matter. The name of the miller your sister speaks of was, I believe, Theodore. He rented from the colonel a mill on the water-course, which was the subject of litigation between M. Barricini and your father. The colonel, with his usual generosity, derived hardly any profit from his mill. Now Tomaso thought that if M. Barricini obtained possession of the water-

course he would have to pay a considerable rent; for M. Barricini, it is well known, is fond of money. In a word, to oblige his brother, Tomaso forged the bandit's letter, and that is the long and the short of the story. You know that the ties of blood are so strong in Corsica, that they sometimes prompt to crime. Have the goodness to cast your eye over this letter sent me by the deputy-attorney-general; it will confirm what I have just told you."

Orso perused the letter, which recited Tomaso's confession in detail, and Colomba read it at the same time over her brother's shoulder. When she had finished reading it she cried out, "Orlanduccio Barricini went to Bastia a month ago, when he heard that my brother was expected home. He will have seen Tomaso and bribed him to this lie."

"Mademoiselle, mademoiselle," said the prefect, impatiently, "you explain everything by means of odious suppositions; is that the way to discover the truth? You, monsieur, judge coolly; tell me, what you think now? Do you think with mademoiselle, that a man who had but a trifling punishment to fear would deliberately accuse himself of forgery to oblige a person he did not know?"

Orso read the attorney's letter over again, weighing each word with extraordinary attention; for since he had seen Barricini, he felt himself harder to convince than he would have been a few days before. At last he was constrained to own that the explanation appeared to him satisfactory. But Colomba cried out vehemently, "Tomaso Bianchi is a cheat. He will not be convicted, or he will escape from prison, I am sure of it."

The prefect shrugged his shoulders.

"I have communicated to you, monsieur," he said, "the information I have received; I now withdraw, and leave you to your reflections. I will wait the decision of your sober judgment, and I trust it will be more powerful than the—suppositions of your sister."

After a few words of apology for Colomba, Orso repeated he was now convinced that Tomaso was the sole culprit.

The prefect had risen to take his leave. "If it was not so late," he said, "I would ask you to come with me and receive Miss Nevil's letter; you might take the opportunity to say to M. Barricini what you have just said to me, and there would be an end to the business."

"Never shall Orso Della Rebbia cross the threshold of a Barricini!" cried Colomba, impetuously.

"Mademoiselle, it appears, is the bellwether of the family," said the prefect, sarcastically.

"Monsieur," said Colomba, firmly, "you are abused; you do not know the barrister, he is the craftiest, the most knavish of men. I beseech you do not make Orso do an act that would overwhelm him with disgrace."

"Colomba!" exclaimed Orso, "you are beside yourself with passion."

"Orso! Orso! by the box I placed in your hands, I implore you to hear me. There is blood between you and the Barricini; you shall not enter their doors."

"Sister!"

"No, brother, you shall not go, or I will quit this house, and you shall never see me more. Orso, have pity on me!" and she threw herself on her knees before him.

"I am exceedingly grieved," said the prefect, "to see Mademoiselle Colomba so unreasonable; you will convince her of the weakness of her objections, I am sure." He opened the door halfway, and stopped, as if expecting Orso to follow him.

"I cannot leave her now," said Orso, "to-morrow, if—"

"I set off early," said the prefect.

"At least, brother," cried Colomba, with her hands clasped together, "wait till to-morrow morning. Let me look over my father's papers, you cannot refuse me that."

"Well, you shall examine them this evening, but when you

have done so, you must give over tormenting me with this extravagant hatred. A thousand pardons, Monsieur le préfet, I am myself so ill at ease, we had better let it be to-morrow."

"The night brings counsel," said the prefect as he withdrew, "I hope that to-morrow there will be an end to all your indecision."

"Saveria!" cried Colomba, "take the lantern and go with M. le préfet, he will give you a letter for my brother." She added a few words in a whisper heard only by Saveria.

"Colomba," said Orso when the prefect was gone, "you have given me much pain; will you then always refuse to listen to plain proof?"

"You have given me till to-morrow," she answered, "I have but very little time, but still I hope."

She then took a bunch of keys, and ran up to a room at the top of the house. Orso heard her hurriedly opening drawers, and rummaging out a secretary in which Colonel Della Rebbia had been in the habit of keeping important papers.

CHAPTER XIV.

Saveria was absent a considerable time, and Orso's impatience was at its height, when at last she made her appearance with a letter in her hand, and followed by little Chilina, who rubbed her eyes, for she had been awakened out of her first sleep.

"What brings you here, Chilina, at this hour?" asked Orso.

"Mademoiselle sent for me," replied Chilina.

"What the deuce can she want with her?" thought Orso; he was in a hurry, however, to open Miss Nevil's letter, and while he was reading it, little Chilina went up-stairs to his sister.

"My father has been rather ill, monsieur," Miss Nevil wrote, "besides, he is so lazy with his pen that I am obliged to act as his secretary. You know he got his feet wet the other day on the seashore, instead of admiring the prospect with us, and that is quite enough to give one the fever in your charming island. I can see the face you make at this, and your hand no doubt goes in quest of your dagger, but I hope you have not got one now. Well, my father has had a slight attack of fever, and I a great fright; the prefect, whom I persist in thinking very agreeable, sent us a physician, a very agreeable gentleman likewise, who set matters right again in a couple of days. The illness has not returned, and my father wants to go out again with his gun, but I still withhold my permission. How have you found your château in the mountains? Is your northern tower still in the same place? Are there many ghosts? I make all these inquiries because my father remembers you promised him deer, wild boars, mouflons. Am I right in the name of that strange animal. We intend to throw ourselves upon your hospitality on our way to Bastia, and I hope that the château of the Della Rebbias, which you tell me is so old and dilapidated, will not tumble down on our heads. Though the prefect is so agreeable that one is never at a loss for conversation with him—by-the-bye, I flatter myself I have made a conquest in that quarter—we have talked together of your signory. The law folks of Bastia have sent him certain confessions made by a rogue they have under lock and key, and which are of a nature to remove every remnant of suspicion from your mind; your feud, which sometimes made me uneasy, must then be at an end. You have no idea how glad I was to hear this. When you set off from here with the fair voceratrice, your gun in your hand, and your brow clouded, you seemed to me more than usually Corsican—too Corsican even. *Basta!* I should not write so much on this subject to you, but that I feel dull. The prefect is going away, alas! We will send you a message when we are

about to set out for your mountains, and I will take the liberty of writing to mademoiselle to bespeak a bruccio of her, *ma solenne.* Meanwhile, give my kindest remembrances to her. I make great use of her dagger; I employ it in cutting the leaves of a romance I brought with me: but the dread blade disdains this office, and makes piteous havoc of my book. Farewell, monsieur, my father sends you his best regards. Hearken to the prefect, he is a man of discernment, and goes out of his way, I believe, on your account. He has to lay a first stone at Corte: it will be a very imposing ceremony I fancy, and I am very sorry I cannot have the pleasure of witnessing it. A gentleman in an embroidered coat, silk stockings, and white scarf, with a trowel in his hand!—and a speech; the ceremony concluding with countless shouts of 'Vive le roi!' You will be very conceited at finding me thus fill four pages of a letter to you, but I repeat, monsieur, I am dull, and, for that reason, I give you leave to write to me at great length. Apropos, I think it strange you have not yet announced to me your auspicious arrival at Pietranera. LYDIA NEVIL.

"P.S. I beg you will attend to the prefect, and do as he tells you. We have settled it between us that you ought to do so, and I shall be very glad if you will."

Orso read this letter three or four times over, mentally accompanying each reading with commentaries unnumbered. He then wrote a long reply, which he despatched by the hands of Saveria to a villager, who was to set out that same night for Ajaccio. By this time he scarcely thought of discussing with his sister the real or imaginary crimes of the Barricini: Miss Nevil's letter made him see everything *en couleur de rose;* he had no room left in his breast for suspicion or rancour. After waiting some time for his sister's return down-stairs, and not finding her make her appearance, he went to bed with a lighter heart than he had felt for many a day. Chilina having been

dismissed with secret instructions, Colomba passed the greater part of the night in reading over old papers. Shortly before daybreak a handful cf gravel was thrown against her window: upon hearing this signal she went down to the garden, opened a private gate, and admitted two men of very unprepossessing appearance into the house. Her first care was to take them into the kitchen and set food before them. The reader shall presently be told who these men were.

CHAPTER XV.

About six o'clock in the morning the prefect's servant knocked at Orso's door. The knock being answered by Colomba, the servant told her that the prefect was ready to set out on his journey, and that he was waiting for her brother. She replied without hesitation that her brother had just missed his footing on the stairs and sprained his ankle; he could not walk a step; begged to be excused, and would take it as a great favour if the prefect would do him the honour of calling on him. Shortly after this Orso came down and asked his sister if the prefect had not sent for him. "He requests you to wait for him here," she answered, with the greatest assurance. Half an hour passed without the least movement being perceived about the house of the Barricini: meanwhile Orso inquired of Colomba whether she had made any discovery; and received for reply that she would state what she had to say in presence of the prefect. She affected to be quite calm and collected, but her colour and her eyes betrayed the feverish agitation of her mind.

At last the door of the Barricini house was thrown open, and the prefect came forth, dressed for a journey, and followed by the mayor and his two sons. The inhabitants of Pietranera had all

been on the alert since sunrise to witness the departure of the first magistrate of the department. What was their stupefaction at beholding him walk straight across the Place, accompanied by the three Barricini, and enter the house of Della Rebbia.

"They are making peace!" cried the village quidnuncs.

"Didn't I tell you so?" said an old man. "Orso Antonio has lived too long on the continent to do things like a man of pluck."

"Ay, but don't you see," remarked a Rebbianist, "that it is the Barricini who are going to him. They beg pardon."

"The prefect has twisted them all round his finger," said the old man. "There's no courage left now-a-days. The young folks care no more for the blood of their fathers than if they were all bastards."

The prefect was not a little surprised to find Orso on his legs and walking with ease. In two words Colomba confessed the untruth she had committed, and begged the prefect's pardon. "Had you been stopping anywhere else, M. le préfet," she said, "my brother would have gone and paid his respects to you yesterday."

Orso was profuse in his apologies, protesting that he had no part in the absurd trick, which annoyed him beyond measure. The prefect and old Barricini appeared to credit his sincerity, which was corroborated by his evident confusion, and by his severe reprimands to his sister; but the mayor's sons did not seem satisfied. "They are making game of us," said Orlanduccio, loud enough to be heard.

"If my sister were to play me such tricks," said Vincentello, "I would soon find a way to cure her."

These words and the tone in which they were uttered, displeased Orso, and rather abated the alacrity of his good will. Looks expressive of little amity were exchanged between him and the young Barricini.

Meanwhile, everybody was seated except Colomba, who remained standing near the kitchen door. The prefect opened the discourse. After a few commonplace observations on the prejudices of the country, he remarked that the most inveterate feuds were in the majority of instances to be traced to misconceptions. Then, addressing the mayor, he told him that M. Della Rebbia had never believed the Barricini family had taken any part, direct or indirect, in the deplorable event that had robbed him of his father; that some doubts indeed had remained on his mind relative to a particular fact connected with the former lawsuit between the families; that those doubts were to be excused in consideration of M. Orso's long absence and of the nature of the information conveyed to him; but that now, in consequence of the light afforded him by recent disclosures, he owned himself completely satisfied, and was desirous of meeting M. Barricini and his family on a footing of amity and good neighbourhood.

Orso bowed stiffly; M. Barricini mumbled out something, nobody knew what; his sons stared up at the ceiling. The prefect, continuing his harangue, was proceeding to set forth to Orso the counterpart of what he had just stated to M. Barricini when Colomba, producing certain papers, advanced gravely between the contracting parties.

"It will give me the liveliest pleasure," she said, "to see an end put to the war between the two families; but to make the reconciliation sincere, everything must be mutually explained, and no kind of doubt suffered to remain. Monsieur le préfet, I had just grounds for looking with suspicion on the declaration of Tomaso Bianchi, proceeding as it did from a man of such bad repute." Looking at M. Barricini, she continued, "I said that, possibly, your sons had seen the man in the prison of Bastia."

"That is false," Orlanduccio broke in, "I did not see him."

Colomba cast a scornful glance at him, and continued with

much seeming calmness. "You accounted for Tomaso's inducement to threaten my father in the name of a formidable bandit, from his desire to keep his brother Theodore in possession of the mill he held of my father at a low rent?"

"That is clear," said the prefect.

"Everything may be accounted for, where such a miscreant is concerned as this Bianchi appears to be," said Orso, deceived by his sister's apparent moderation.

"The forged letter," continued Colomba, whose eyes were beginning to glow more vividly, "is dated the 11th of July. Tomaso was at that time at the mill with his brother."

"Yes," said the mayor, with some uneasiness.

"What, then, was Tomaso Bianchi's interest?" cried Colomba, triumphantly. "His brother's lease was expired: my father had given him notice on the 1st of July. Here is my father's memorandum-book, with an entry of the notice to quit; and here is a letter from an agent in Ajaccio, proposing a new tenant." So saying, she delivered the papers she held in her hand to the prefect.

The astonishment was general. The mayor visibly turned pale. Orso, knitting his brows, stepped forward to examine the papers which the prefect was reading with great attention.

"They are making game of us!" cried Orlanduccio again, starting up in a passion. "Come away, father; we should never have come here!"

A moment was enough for M. Barricini, to enable him to recover his self-possession. He asked to see the papers; the prefect handed them to him without a word. Pushing up his green spectacles upon his forehead, he glanced over them with much seeming composure, whilst Colomba watched him with the looks of a tigress that beholds a deer approaching the lair of her young ones.

"Well," said M. Barricini, lowering his spectacles, and returning the papers to the prefect, "knowing the good-nature of

the late M. le colonel—Tomaso thought—he must have thought that M. le colonel would withdraw his notice to quit. In fact, he remained in possession, therefore—"

"It was I," said Colomba, contemptuously, "who gave him leave. My father was dead; and standing in the position I did, it was incumbent on me not to deal harshly with the retainers of my family."

"But, after all," said the prefect, "this Tomaso confesses that he wrote the letter—that is clear."

"One thing is clear to me," said Orso, "and that is, that there are infamous villanies at the bottom of the whole affair."

"I have still to contradict an assertion made by these gentlemen," said Colomba. She opened the kitchen door, and forthwith Brandolaccio, the theological student, and the dog Brusco entered the room. The two bandits were apparently without arms; they had their cartridge-boxes in their belts, but not their usual accompaniment of the pistol. They took off their caps respectfully as they entered.

One may guess the effect produced by their sudden appearance. The mayor had like to fall flat on his back, while his two sons threw themselves bravely before him with their hands thrust in their pockets in search of their daggers. The prefect made a movement towards the door; and Orso, seizing Brandolaccio by the collar, shouted to him, "What brings you here, you rascal?"

"It is a trap!" cried the mayor, striving to open the door; but Saveria had double locked it on the outside, by order of the bandits, as she afterwards admitted.

"Good people!" said Brandolaccio, "don't be afraid of me; I am no devil, for all I am so black. We have no bad intention. M. le préfet, I am your most obedient servant. Gently, lieutenant, you are strangling me. We are here as witnesses. Come, curé, you talk; you have the gift of the gab."

"M. le préfet," said the licentiate, "I have not the honour

of being known to you. My name is Giocanto Castriconi, better known as the curé. Ha! you know me now! Mademoiselle, whom I had not the advantage of knowing either, sent to beg I would give her some information touching one Tomaso Bianchi, with whom I was a fellow-prisoner three weeks ago in Bastia. Now this is what I have to tell you."

"Spare yourself the trouble," said the prefect; "I can hear nothing from a man like you. M. Della Rebbia, I fully believe that you have had no part in this vile plot. But are you master in your own house? Have this door opened. Your sister will probably have to answer for the strange acquaintance she keeps up with bandits."

"M. le préfet," cried Colomba, "condescend to hear what this man has to say. You are here to render justice to all, and it is your duty to search out the truth. Speak, Giocanto Castriconi."

"Don't listen to him," cried the three Barricini, simultaneously.

"If everybody talks at once," said the bandit, smiling, "we shall hardly come to a clear understanding. In prison, then, as I was saying, I had for my companion, not for my friend, this Tomaso in question. He was frequently visited by M. Orlanduccio."

"That is false," cried the two brothers, together.

"Two negations are equivalent to an affirmation," observed Castriconi, coolly. "Tomaso had money; he ate and drank of the best. I have always been fond of good cheer (it is the least of my failings), and in spite of my repugnance to rub skirts with the scamp, I consented to dine with him several times. By way of returning the favour, I proposed to him that he should escape along with me;—a certain little body, who was indebted to me for some favours, had furnished me with the means.—I do not wish to compromise any one.—Tomaso refused, telling me he was sure of his safety; that the barrister Barricini had

spoken for him to all the judges, and that he would get off as white as snow, with money in his pocket. As for me, I thought it expedient to take the air. *Dixi.*"

"What the fellow says is all a pack of lies," repeated Orlanduccio, stoutly. "If we were in the open country, each with a gun in his hand, he would not talk in this style."

"That's all my eye," cried Brandolaccio. "Don't you go and quarrel with the curé, Orlanduccio."

"Will you at last let me out, M. Della Rebbia?" asked the prefect, stamping with impatience.

"Saveria, Saveria!" called Orso, "open the door, in the devil's name!"

"One moment," said Brandolaccio. "We must first be off. M. le préfet, it is customary, when people meet at the house of a common friend, to give each other half an hour's truce at parting." The prefect scowled disdainfully upon him.

"Good day to all the company," continued Brandolaccio. Then, stretching out his arm horizontally, "Come, Brusco," he said to his dog, "jump for M. le préfet!" The dog jumped, the bandits hurriedly caught up their arms in the kitchen, a shrill whistle was heard, and the door of the room was opened, as if by enchantment.

"M. Barricini," said Orso, with concentrated rage; "I hold you for a forger. I will this day lay my complaint against you before the attorney-general, for forgery and confederacy with Bianchi. Perhaps I shall have another and more fearful charge to bring against you."

"And I, M. Della Rebbia," said the mayor, "will bring my charge against you for ambuscade and conspiracy with bandits. Meanwhile, M. le préfet will commend you to the gendarmes."

"The prefect will do his duty," said that gentleman, sternly. "He will see that public order is not disturbed at Pietranera; he will take care that justice shall be done. I speak to all of you, gentlemen."

The mayor and Vincentello were already out of the room, and Orlanduccio was backing out after them, when Orso said to him in a whisper, "Your father is an old man I could crush with a blow; it is with you I will deal—with you and your brother."

By way of reply, Orlanduccio drew his dagger, and flung himself on Orso like a maniac; but before he could use his weapon, Colomba seized his arm, and wrenched it round with great force, whilst Orso struck him in the face with his fist, and sent him reeling, till he was brought up by the door-post. The dagger dropped from Orlanduccio's hand, but Vincentello had his own weapon and was returning into the room, when Colomba, catching up a gun, let him see that the match was not an equal one. At the same moment the prefect threw himself between the combatants. "We shall meet soon, Ors' Anton' !" cried Orlanduccio; and, rushing out, he pulled the door to behind him, and locked it, to gain time for his retreat.

Orso and the prefect remained a long while at opposite ends of the room without speaking. Colomba, her face radiant with the pride of victory, gazed upon them by turns as she leaned on the gun that had decided the fray.

"What a country! what a country!" cried the prefect at last, springing from his chair. "M. Della Rebbia, you have been wrong. I demand your word of honour that you will refrain from all violence, and will wait until justice decides in this cursed affair."

"True, M. le préfet, I was wrong to strike the miscreant; but the thing is done, and I cannot refuse him the satisfaction he has demanded of me."

"No such thing! he has no thought of fighting you. But if he assassinates you,—you have done quite enough to bring that about."

"We will be on our guard," said Colomba.

"Orlanduccio appears to me a fellow of courage," said Orso, "and I augur better of him, M. le préfet. He was hasty with

his dagger, but I do not know if I should not have acted the same in his place. It is lucky for me that my sister's wrist is not that of a fine lady."

"You shall not fight!" cried the prefect. "I forbid it."

"Permit me to say, monsieur, that where my honour is concerned I recognise no other authority than my own conscience."

"I tell you you shall not fight!"

"You may have me arrested, monsieur,—that is, if I let myself be taken. But if that were the case, it would only serve to postpone an affair that is now inevitable. You are a man of honour, M. le préfet, and you know well it cannot be otherwise."

"If you were to arrest my brother," said Colomba, "half the village would take his part, and we should have a fine shooting bout."

"I warn you, monsieur," said Orso, "and I beg you will believe it is no empty bravado of mine—I warn you that if M. Barricini abuses his authority as mayor to cause my arrest, I will defend myself."

"M. Barricini is suspended from this day," the prefect answered. "He will prove his innocence, I hope. Look you, monsieur, I feel an interest in you. All I ask of you is very little: remain quietly at home till my return from Corte. I shall be but three days away. I will return with the attorney-general, and we will then thoroughly unravel this sad affair. Will you promise that till then you will abstain from all hostilities?"

"I cannot, monsieur, if Orlanduccio demands a meeting of me, as I expect he will."

"What! M. Della Rebbia, you a French soldier, to think of fighting a duel with a man you suspect of forgery?"

"I have struck him, monsieur."

"But if you had struck a fellow from the galleys, and he de-

manded satisfaction of you, would you fight with him? Come, Monsieur Orso! See now, I ask you still less than I did before; do not seek Orlanduccio. I give you leave to fight him if he challenges you."

"He will do so, I am certain. I promise you, however, I will not strike him again by way of inducing him to fight."

"What a country!" the prefect repeated, striding up and down the room. "Whenever shall I see France again?"

"M. le préfet," said Colomba, in her sweetest voice, "it is growing late, would you do us the honour to breakfast here?"

The prefect could not help laughing. "I have stayed here too long—it looks like partiality—And that confounded first stone which I have to lay!—I must go—Mademoiselle Della Rebbia—what mischiefs you have, perhaps, sown the seeds of this day!"

"At least, M. le préfet, you will do my sister the justice to believe that her convictions are deeply rooted—nay, I am now sure, you yourself think them well grounded."

"Farewell, monsieur," said the prefect, waving his hand. "I tell you fairly, I am going to give orders to the brigadier of gendarmes to have his eye upon you."

When the prefect was gone, "Orso," said Colomba, "you are not on the continent now.—Orlanduccio knows nothing about your duels; besides, it is not the death of a brave man that wretch should die."

"Colomba, my dear, you are a heroine. I am under great obligation to you for having saved me from a good thrust under the ribs. Give me that little hand of yours to kiss. But see now, let me go my own way to work; there are certain things you do not understand. Let me have breakfast, and as soon as the prefect is fairly on his way, send for little Chilina, who is so capital a messenger; I shall want her to carry a letter."

While Colomba was preparing breakfast, Orso went up to his bedroom, and wrote the following note:

"You must be eager for a meeting with me; I am none the less so. To-morrow morning at six o'clock we can meet in the valley of Acquaviva. I am very expert with the pistol, and do not propose that weapon to you. They say you are a good shot with the gun; let us each, then, take a double-barrelled gun. I will be on the ground, accompanied by a man from this village. If your brother chooses to accompany you, take another second, and let me know. In that case only shall I have two seconds.

"ORSO ANTONIO DELLA REBBIA."

The prefect, after remaining an hour in the house of the mayor's adjunct, and looking in for a few minutes upon the Barricini, set out for Corte, escorted by a single gendarme. A quarter of an hour afterwards, Chilina took the above letter, and delivered it into Orlanduccio's own hands.

The answer was not received till the evening. It was signed by M. Barricini, senior, and notified to Orso his intention of laying before the attorney-general the threatening letter he had addressed to his son. "Strong in a clear conscience," the letter concluded, "I wait till justice shall have pronounced its verdict upon your calumnies."

Meanwhile, five or six goatherds, sent for by Colomba, came to garrison the tower of the Della Rebbias. In spite of Orso's protest, loopholes were arranged before the windows looking out on the Place, and all that evening he was continually receiving offers of service from different people of the village. A letter even reached him from the theological bandit, promising in his own name and that of Brandolaccio, that they would each lend a hand if the mayor called in the aid of the gendarmes. It ended with the following postscript: "May I venture to ask you what M. le préfet thinks of the excellent education my friend is bestowing on the dog Brusco? Next to Chilina, I know not a more docile pupil, nor one of happier promise."

CHAPTER XVI.

The next day passed without hostilities. Both parties stood on the defensive. Orso did not leave the house, and the door of the Barricini remained constantly closed. The five gendarmes left in garrison at Pietranera were seen walking up and down the Place, or about the environs of the village, in company with the rural guard, the solitary representative of the urban militia. The deputy mayor never took off his official scarf; but, saving the loopholes in front of the windows of the hostile houses, nothing betokened war. A Corsican only would have remarked, that the groups in the Place round the evergreen oak consisted exclusively of females.

At supper, Colomba handed to her brother, with great glee, the following letter, which she had just received from Miss Nevil:

"My dear Mademoiselle Colomba,

"It gives me great pleasure to learn, by a letter from your brother, that your feud is at an end. I sincerely congratulate you. My father is quite tired of Ajaccio, now that your brother is no longer here to talk of military matters with him, and to join him in his shooting rambles. We leave the town to-day, and will pass the night at the house of your relation, for whom we have a letter. The day after to-morrow, about eleven, I will beg of you to let me taste your mountain bruccio, so superior, as you tell me, to what they make in town.

"Adieu, dear Mademoiselle Colomba,

"Your friend,

"Lydia Nevil."

"Then she has not received my second letter," cried Orso.

"You see from the date of hers, that Miss Nevil must have been on the road when your letter arrived in Ajaccio. You told her then not to come?"

"I told her we were in a state of siege; no fit situation, it strikes me, for receiving company."

"Pooh!" these English are queer people. She said to me the last night we passed in the same room, that she would be sorry to leave Corsica without having seen a real vendetta. If you liked, Orso, we might treat her to the spectacle of an attack on the house of our enemies."

"Do you know," replied Orso, "nature has committed a great mistake in making you a woman, Colomba? You would have made a capital soldier."

"May be so. Be that as it may, I will go and prepare my bruccio."

"There is no need. We must send some one to them with a line to stop them before they set out."

"Indeed! what, send a messenger in such weather as this, that the torrent may sweep him away, and your letter along with him? How I pity the poor bandits in this tempest! Fortunately, however, they have good thick cloaks. Shall I tell you what you must do, Orso? If the weather clears up, set off very early to-morrow morning, and get to our relation's house before our friends have started. You may easily do this, for Miss Nevil is always a late riser. You will tell them what has happened here, and if they still have a mind to come, we shall be very glad to see them."

Orso readily acceded to this arrangement, and Colomba resumed after some moments' silence, "May be you think I was joking, Orso, when I spoke of an attack on the house of the Barricini. Are you aware that we are in strength, two to one at least! Since the prefect suspended the mayor, all the men hereabouts are for us, and we could make mincemeat of them.

It would be very easy to set the thing going. If you liked I would go to the fountain and make game of their women; they would come out. Perhaps—for they are such cowards—perhaps they would fire upon me through their loopholes; but they would miss me. It would be all right then; for they would have been the aggressors. Woe betide the beaten: who is to know the quarter a good shot comes from in the confusion of a fray? Take your sister's advice, Orso; these blackgowns that are coming here will spoil a lot of paper and talk a deal of useless stuff. Nothing will come of all their doings. That old fox would find a way to make them see stars in broad noon. Oh! if the prefect had not thrown himself before Vincentello there would have been one the fewer of them." All this was said with the same coolness as she had talked a moment before of preparing a bruccio.

Orso, astounded, stared at his sister with an admiration tinctured with inquietude. "My gentle Colomba," he said, rising from table, "you are, I fear, the devil incarnate. But make your mind easy. If I don't succeed in bringing the Barricini to the gallows, I will find means to settle the matter some other way.—Hot ball or cold iron![1] You see I have not forgot Corsican."

"The sooner the better," said Colomba, sighing. "What horse will you ride to-morrow, Ors' Anton'?"

"The black. Why do you ask?"

"To have barley given him."

Orso having retired to his chamber, Colomba sent Saveria and her goatherds to bed, and remained alone in the kitchen where the bruccio was cooking. From time to time she listened, longing, as it seemed, for the moment of her brother's going to bed. When she judged that he was at last asleep, she took up a knife, tried the sharpness of its edge, put her little feet into

[1] *Palla calda u farru freddu*—a very common expression.

some large shoes left behind by one of the men, and stole into the garden without making the slightest noise.

The garden, enclosed between walls, adjoined a tolerably spacious paddock, where the horses were kept: for the Corsican horses scarcely know the stable. In general they are turned loose afield, and thrown upon their own sagacity for finding fodder and shelter from cold and rain.

Colomba opened the garden-gate with the same caution and went into the paddock, and the horses, accustomed to receive bread and salt from her hand, came up to her at the signal of a low whistle. The moment that the black horse was within her reach, she grasped him firmly by the mane, and slit his ear with the knife. The animal made a tremendous bound, and darted off with that horrid piercing cry, which sometimes escapes from the horse when he suffers acute pain. Satisfied with what she had done, Colomba was making her way back into the garden, when Orso threw open his window, and cried out, "Who goes there?" and next moment she heard him cocking his gun. Fortunately for her, the garden-gate was in complete darkness and partly concealed by a great fig tree. Presently she saw from the intermitting flashes in her brother's room, that he was striking a light to kindle his lamp. She hastily closed the garden-gate, and stealing along by the walls, so that her black garments were confounded with the dark foliage of the espalier fruit trees, she succeeded in getting back to the kitchen some seconds before Orso made his appearance.

"What is the matter?" she asked him.

"It struck me that some one was opening the garden-gate."

"Impossible. The dog would have barked. Let us go and see, however."

Orso went all round the garden; and having satisfied himself that the outer-gate was fast, he felt rather ashamed of his false alarm, and was about to return to his bedroom."

"I am glad to see, brother," said Colomba, "that you are growing wary, as one ought to be in your situation."

"You are breaking me in. Good night."

Orso was up and ready to start next morning by daybreak. His costume bespoke at once the pretension to elegance of a gentleman about to present himself before a lady, whose favourable opinion he coveted, and the prudence of a Corsican in vendetta. Over a close-fitting blue military frock, he wore a green silk cord as a bandolier, from which was suspended a small tin box containing his cartridges; his dagger was in a side-pocket, and in his hand he carried his good Manton loaded with ball. While he hastily swallowed a cup of coffee poured out for him by Colomba, a goatherd went out to saddle and bridle his horse. Orso and his sister soon followed the man to the paddock. The goatherd had caught the animal, but had let the saddle and bridle fall, and seemed speechless with consternation, whilst the horse, recollecting the wound he had received over night, and fearing for his other ear, plunged, kicked, neighed, and played all manner of pranks.

"Come, be quick!" cried Orso.

"Eh! Oh! Ors' Anton'! Ors' Anton'!" shouted the goatherd; "Blood of the Madonna!" etc. And out came a volley of imprecations, the greater part of which are untranslatable.

"What is wrong now?" asked Colomba.

The whole household was by this time gathered round the horse, and when they saw him bleeding, and with his ear slit, there was a general burst of astonishment and indignation. The reader must be informed that to mutilate an enemy's horse is, on the part of a Corsican, at once an act of vengeance, a defiance, and a menace of death. Nothing but a gun-shot can expiate this outrage. Though Orso, from his long residence on the continent, was less sensible than those about him to the enormity of the insult, nevertheless had a Barricinist fallen in his way at the moment, it is very likely he would have made

him pay dearly, on the spot, for the gross affront he thought his enemies had put upon him. "The cowardly blackguards!" he cried, "to wreak their spite on a poor animal, when they dare not meet me to my face!"

"What do we tarry for?" vociferated Colomba. "Shall they come and insult us, mutilate our horses, and we not retaliate? Are you men?"

"Vengeance!" shouted the goatherds. "Let us lead the horse about the village, and go and storm their house."

"There is a barn thatched with straw close to their tower," said old Polo Griffo. "I'll set it blazing in no time." Another proposed to go and fetch the church ladders; a third to break in the door of the Barricini with the help of a beam lying in the Place, and intended for some new building. Amidst this whirlwind of fierce voices, Colomba was heard telling her partisans, that before they set about their work they should every one receive a large glass of aniseed from her.

Unfortunately, or rather fortunately, the effect she had expected from her cruelty to the poor animal was lost in a great measure on Orso. He had no doubt but this savage mutilation was the work of one of his enemies, and Orlanduccio was the individual he more particularly suspected; but he could not imagine that after receiving a blow from his hand and a challenge, the young man would have thought to wipe out his disgrace by slitting a horse's ear. So mean and paltry an act of vengeance increased Orso's scorn for his enemies, and he coincided in opinion with the prefect, that such men were unworthy of meeting him. As soon as he could make himself heard, he declared to his amazed partisans that they must abandon their warlike intentions, and that the ministers of justice, who were coming, would very sufficiently take vengeance for his horse's ear. "I am master here," he said, sternly, "and I will be obeyed. The first that ventures to talk of killing or burning will catch something hot from me. Come! saddle the gray."

"What! Orso," said Colomba, taking him aside, "will you suffer them to insult us? In my father's time the Barricini would never have dared to mutilate an animal of ours."

"I promise you they shall have cause to rue it; but it is for the gendarmes and the jailers to punish such despicable wretches, who are only brave against brutes. I told you before, justice shall avenge me upon them, or if not, you shall have no need to remind me whose son I am."

"Patience!" said Colomba with a sigh.

"Bear it well in mind, sister," continued Orso, "if I find on my return that any overt act has been committed against the Barricini, I will never forgive you." He then went on to say in a milder tone, "It is very possible, nay, very probable, I shall be accompanied on my return by the colonel and his daughter; see that their rooms are in good order, and let there be a good breakfast, so that our guests may have as little as possible to complain of. It is a very good thing, Colomba, to be courageous; but a woman should also be able to manage a house becomingly. Come, kiss me, be steady; here comes the gray."

"Orso," said Colomba, "you shall not set out alone."

"I don't want any one," replied her brother, "and I promise you, I will not let my own ear be slit."

"I will never let you set out alone in time of war. Ho! Polo Griffo! Gian' Francè! Memmo! take your guns; you are to go with my brother."

After a pretty keen discussion, Orso was forced to submit, and suffer himself to be attended by an escort. He chose the most impetuous of the goatherds, those who had been loudest in proposing aggressive measures; then, after renewing his injunctions to his sister and to the goatherds who remained behind, he set off on his journey, taking a circuit on this occasion to avoid the house of the Barricini.

They had left Pietranera some distance behind them, and were riding forward at a brisk pace, when, as they forded a

small brook that emptied itself into a swamp, old Polo Griffo saw several pigs lying comfortably in the mud, enjoying the double delight of the sunshine and the cold water. Instantly taking aim at the largest of them, he sent a ball through its head and killed it on the spot. The companions of the victim started up and scampered off with surprising agility, and though the other goatherd had a shot at them as they ran, they escaped safe and sound to a thicket where they were quickly lost to sight.

"Blockheads!" cried Orso, "you take pigs for wild boars."

"No, we don't, Ors' Anton'," replied Polo Griffo, "but these pigs belong to the barrister; and this will teach him to mutilate our horses."

"What, you rascals!" shouted Orso, in a fury. "Do you copy the infamous acts of our enemies? Leave me, scoundrels. You are good for nothing but to fight with pigs. I vow to heaven, that if you dare to follow me, I will break your heads."

The goatherds stared at each other in speechless amazement. Orso clapped spurs to his horse, and galloped away.

"Well!" said Polo Griffo, "here's a fine go! That's the way people treat you for loving them, is it? His father, the colonel, gave me a blowing up for levelling a gun once at the barrister. The more fool I not to fire. And the son—you see what I have done for him. He talks of breaking my head, as you would serve a leaky gourd. That's what folks learn on the continent, Memmo!"

"Ay, and if they find out that you killed the pig, they will be down upon you with a lawsuit, and Ors' Anton' won't talk to the judges or pay the barrister. Luckily no one saw you, and you have Saint Nega on your side, to get you out of the scrape."

After a brief deliberation, the two goatherds concluded that the best thing to be done, was to throw the pig into a quagmire, which they accordingly did, but not till they had helped themselves to some rashers from the innocent victim to the feuds of the Della Rebbias and the Barricini.

CHAPTER XVII.

Having shaken off his ill-disciplined escort, Orso was pursuing his way, thinking more of the pleasure of meeting Miss Nevil, than of the danger of encountering his enemies. "The suit I am about to carry on against those dastard Barricini"—thus ran his communing with himself—"will oblige me to go to Bastia. Why should I not go along with Miss Nevil? What is to hinder our setting off together from Bastia for the waters of Orezza?" Suddenly, recollections of childhood rose up in his mind, and brought that picturesque spot distinctly before him. He fancied himself transported to a verdant plain overshadowed by chestnut-trees, the growth of uncounted centuries. On a glistening green sward, thickly set with blue flowers, looking like eyes that smiled on him, he beheld Miss Nevil seated by his side. She had taken off her bonnet, and her rich hair, softer and finer than silk, shone like gold in the sunbeams that glanced through the foliage. Her eyes, of so pellucid a blue, seemed to him to be bluer than the firmament. With her cheek resting on her hand, she listened pensively to the tremulous accents of his passion. She was dressed in that muslin gown she wore the last day he had seen her at Ajaccio; and from beneath its folds peeped out a small foot in a black satin shoe. Orso was saying to himself how happy he should be to kiss that foot; but one of Miss Nevil's hands was ungloved and held a flower. Orso took the flower, and Lydia's hand pressed his; and he kissed the flower, and then the hand, and Lydia was not angry. All these thoughts prevented his noticing the road he was travelling, but still he trotted on. He was about

to bestow a second kiss in imagination on Miss Nevil's white hand, when he almost kissed in reality the head of his horse, as it stopped short all on a sudden. It was little Chilina who had seized his rein, and thus checked his progress.

"Where are you going, Ors' Anton'?" she asked. "Don't you know that your enemy is near at hand?"

"My enemy?" cried Orso, enraged at being interrupted at so interesting a moment. "Where is he?"

"Orlanduccio is near here. He is waiting for you. Go back, go back."

"Ha! He is waiting for me! You have seen him?"

"Yes, Ors' Anton', I was lying down in the fern when he passed by. He looked all round him with his spy-glass."

"Which way did he go?"

"Down that way, the road you are going."

"Thank you."

"Ors' Anton', had not you better wait for my uncle? He can't be long, and with him you would be safe."

"Never fear, Chili, I have no need of your uncle."

"If you like I will go before you."

"No, no, thank you."

And urging his horse, Orso rode rapidly in the direction pointed out to him by the little girl.

His first impulse had been a headlong burst of anger, and he welcomed the opportunity chance threw in his way to castigate the cowardly ruffian who had mutilated a horse to revenge himself for a blow. Then, as he rode on, the sort of half promise he had given the prefect, and above all the fear of missing the visit of Miss Nevil, made him change his mind and almost wish that he might not encounter Orlanduccio. Presently, the recollection of his father, the outrage committed upon his horse, and the threats of his foes, rekindled his anger, and impelled him to seek out his enemy, that he might provoke him and compel him to fight. Thus agitated by conflicting feelings, he

continued to ride forward; but he now did so cautiously, scrutinizing every bush and hedge, and sometimes stopping to listen to the vague sounds commonly heard in the country. Ten minutes after he had parted from Chilina (it was then about nine o'clock) he reached the verge of an extremely abrupt slope. The road, or rather the scarcely marked path he was pursuing, passed through a recently burnt mâquis. The ground on that spot was covered with white ashes, and here and there some shrubs and large trees blackened by fire and entirely stripped of leaves, stood erect, though they had ceased to live. Looking at a burnt mâquis the spectator fancies himself transported to a northern clime in the depth of winter, and the contrast between the arid spots, over which the flame has passed, and the luxuriant vegetation all around, makes them appear still more dreary and desolate. But Orso beheld only one thing just now in the landscape before him, a thing of no little importance indeed in his situation; the earth being bare could not shelter any ambuscade, and a man who may expect every moment to see the muzzle of a gun thrust out from a bush and pointed at his breast, regards as a sort of oasis an uniform tract of ground where nothing interrupts the view. Beyond the burnt mâquis there were several cultivated fields, enclosed, as usual in that country, between dry stone walls breast high. The path passed between these inclosures, which from the huge chestnut trees scattered irregularly over them looked at a distance like a thick wood.

The steepness of the declivity obliging him to dismount, Orso threw the bridle on his horse's neck, and descended rapidly, gliding over the loose white ashes. He was not more than five and twenty paces from one of the walls to the right of the road, when he saw exactly in front of him, first the barrel of a gun, and next a head rising above the wall. The gun was levelled at him, and he recognised Orlanduccio about to fire. Orso promptly put himself in a posture of defence, and the two

adversaries, with their guns presented, gazed on each other for some seconds with that keen emotion which the bravest man experiences at the moment of dealing or receiving a death-blow.

"Despicable coward!" cried Orso, and the words had scarcely passed his lips when he saw the flash from Orlanduccio's gun, and almost at the same moment another shot went off on his left on the other side of the path, fired by a man he had not perceived, and who had taken aim at him from behind another wall. Both balls struck him; the last fired passed through his left arm, while Orlanduccio's struck him in the chest, tore his coat, but fortunately meeting with the blade of his dagger flattened itself against it, and only bruised him slightly. Orso's left arm fell powerless by his side, and the barrel of his gun sank for an instant; but he immediately raised it again, and pointing it with his right hand alone, he fired at Orlanduccio. His enemy's head, which he only saw as far down as the eyes, disappeared behind the wall. Turning to the left Orso discharged his second barrel at a man wrapped in smoke, whom he hardly discerned. That figure likewise disappeared. The four shots had followed each other with incredible rapidity, such as never was surpassed by the platoon firing of the best trained soldiers. After Orso's last shot all was once more still. The smoke from his gun rose slowly upwards; there was no movement behind the wall, nor the slightest noise. But for the pain he felt in his arm he could have fancied that the men he had just fired at were phantoms of his imagination.

Expecting a second discharge, Orso moved a few paces, and sheltered himself behind one of the burnt trees that remained standing in the mâquis. He then placed his gun between his knees, and hastily loaded it again. Meanwhile he felt excruciating torture from his left arm, which felt as if dragged down by an enormous weight. What had become of his adversaries? He could not understand it. Had they run away, or had they been wounded, he would assuredly have heard some noise, some

movement among the leaves. Were they dead then? or rather, were they not waiting ensconced behind their walls for an opportunity of firing at him again? In this uncertainty, and finding his strength diminishing, he sank on his right knee, laid his wounded arm on the other knee, and rested the barrel of his gun on a branch projecting from the trunk of the burnt tree. His finger on the trigger, his eye fixed on the wall, his ear attentive to the slightest sound, he remained motionless for some minutes, which seemed to him an age. At last he heard a faint shout a long way behind him, and presently a dog darting down the slope with the swiftness of an arrow, stopped near him, wagging its tail. It was Brusco, the pupil and companion of the bandits, the forerunner, no doubt, of his master, and never was an honest man's appearance more intensely longed for. The dog facing towards the nearest wall, with his nose thrown up, snuffed the air uneasily. Suddenly he uttered a low growling, ran and leaped across the wall, and almost immediately sprang up again on the top, whence he stared at Orso, with looks that spoke surprise as plainly as dog could express it. He then began to snuff the air again, turning this time towards the other wall, which he jumped over as he had done the first. In a second he made his appearance again on the top of the wall, and showed the same symptoms of astonishment and uneasiness. At last he leaped down into the mâquis, and with his tail between his legs and his eyes continually bent on Orso, he sidled away from him slowly till he got a certain distance; then setting off at full speed he reascended the slope almost as swiftly as he had descended it, to meet a man who was hurrying down rapidly spite of the steepness of the declivity.

"Hola! Brando!" shouted Orso, as soon as he thought him within hearing.

"Ho! Ors' Anton'! You are wounded?" asked Brandolaccio, running up out of breath. "In the body or in the limbs?"

"In the arm."

"The arm! that is nothing. And the other?"

"I think I hit him."

Brandolaccio, following his dog, ran to the nearest wall, and leaning over the top, looked down on the opposite side. Then, taking off his cap—

"Good day to Signor Orlanduccio," he said. Then turning towards Orso, he saluted him gravely in his turn. "That's what I call a man well settled," he said.

"Is he alive still?" asked Orso, gasping for breath.

"Oh! he could not think of it; he is too much bothered with the ball you put in his eye. Blood of the Madonna, what a hole! Prime gun, by my faith! What a bore! How it scatters your brain! I say, Ors' Anton', when I heard first, crack! crack! says I to myself, The deuce! they're spiflicating my lieutenant. Then I hear, boom! boom! Oho! thinks I, there's the English gun a-talking: he's giving it them back again.—Hallo, Brusco, what do you want with me now?"

The dog led him to the other wall. "So!" exclaimed Brandolaccio, stupified at the sight he beheld. "Right and left! that's all! Ay, ay, it's easy to see powder's dear, for you make the most of it."

"What is it, for God's sake?" inquired Orso.

"Come, none of your joking, lieutenant! You tumble down the game and want another to pick it up. I know who will have a queer dessert to-day, and that's the barrister Barricini. Fresh meat, will you buy, will you buy! And now, who the deuce is to be the heir?"

"What! Vincentello dead too?"

"Dead as a door nail. God save the hearers![1] There is one thing good in you, you don't leave your men long in pain. Just come and look at Vincentello: he is on his knees still, with

[1] *Salute a noi!* An expression that commonly follows on the heels of the words death and dead, and serves by way of corrective to them.

his head leaning against the wall. You would fancy he was asleep : a leaden sleep, as the saying is. Poor devil !"

Orso turned away his head with a sickening feeling. "Are you sure he is dead ?"

"You are like Sampiero Corso, who never dealt but a single blow. Look, just here—in the chest, to the left, exactly as Vincileone was hit at Waterloo. I'd lay any wager the ball is not far from his heart. Right and left !—Oh ! I've done with shooting. Two in two shots !—With ball !—The two brothers ! If he had had a third shot he'd have brought down the papa. Well, better luck next time. What a shot, Ors' Anton' !—And to think that the like will never happen to a brave chap like me, to bring down the gendarmes two at a time !"

While talking thus, the bandit examined Orso's arm, and ripped up his coat sleeve with his dagger.

"Nothing to signify," he said; "here's a frock coat which will give Mademoiselle Colomba a job. Eh ! what's this ? Hit in the breast ? Nothing gone in there, is there ? No, you would not be so lively. Let's see ; try to stir your fingers. Do you feel my teeth when I bite your little finger ? Not much ? No matter, it won't signify. Let me take your handkerchief and your cravat. Your frock coat is done for. What the deuce did you make yourself so fine for ? Were you going to a wedding ? Here, drink a drop of wine. Why don't you carry a flask ? Who ever saw a Corsican leave home without a flask ?" Then in the midst of his surgical occupations he stopped to ejaculate, "Right and left ! both stiff dead ! How the curé will laugh ! Right and left ! Ah ! here she comes at last, that little tortoise, Chilina."

Orso made no reply. He was as pale as a corpse, and trembled from head to foot.

"Chili," shouted Brandolaccio, "go and look behind that wall. Eh ?" The child climbed up on the wall, and the moment she perceived the corpse of Orlanduccio she made the sign of the cross.

"Is it you, uncle?" she inquired, timidly.

"Me! ain't I grown an old good-for-nothing? It's monsieur's work, Chili. Make your compliments to him."

"Mademoiselle will be very glad of it," said Chilina; "but she will be very sorry indeed to know that you are wounded, Ors' Anton'."

"Come along, Ors' Anton'," continued the bandit, when he had finished dressing the wound; "here's Chilina has caught your horse again. Mount and come with me to the mâquis of La Stazzona. They'll be sharp fellows that find you there. We will entertain you with the best we have. When we get to St. Christina's cross you must dismount. Chilina will take your horse and carry the news to Mademoiselle Colomba; and on the way you can give her whatever messages you have to send. You may speak without reserve to the little thing, Ors' Anton'; she would let herself be chopped to pieces sooner than betray her friends. Go along," he said, while his looks and his voice bespoke fond affection; "go be excommunicated, you hussy; go be cursed, you jade!" Superstitious like many of his brother bandits, Brandolaccio was afraid of putting a spell on children, if he addressed them with words of blessing or praise; for it is well known that the mysterious powers that preside over the "annocchiatura,"[1] follow the malicious practice of executing the reverse of our wishes.

"Where will you have me go, Brando?" asked Orso, faintly.

"Egad, there's a choice for you: to prison or else to the mâquis. But a Della Rebbia does not know the road to prison. To the mâquis, Ors' Anton'!"

"Farewell, then, to all my hopes!" the wounded man sadly ejaculated.

"Your hopes? Well, that's a good one. Did you hope to do better with a double-barrelled gun? But, I say, how the

[1] An involuntary fascination, effected either by the eyes or by word of mouth.

deuce did they manage to hit you? They must have been as hard to kill as cats."

"They fired first," said Orso.

"Ay, true, I forgot. Crack, crack! boom, boom! right and left with one hand![1] Let any man better that, and I will go hang myself. Come, there you are in the saddle. Before you go, just have a look at your work. It is not polite to quit the company in this way, without bidding them good-bye."

Orso, however, set spurs to his horse; on no consideration would he have looked upon the unfortunate men he had slain.

"Hark ye, Ors' Anton'," said the bandit, taking hold of the horse's bridle; "shall I speak frankly to you? Well, then, no offence to you, but I am sorry for these two poor lads. I beg your pardon—so handsome—so strong—so young! Orlanduccio, that I hunted with so often! He gave me a packet of cigars four days ago. Vincentello, that was always so sprightly! It is true, you did what you ought to do; and besides, it is too pretty a shot to be regretted. But for myself, I was not in your vengeance. I know you are right; when one has an enemy, one must get rid of him. But they were an old family, the Barricini. Another missing from muster; and by a right and left shot! That's what tickles me!"

Thus pronouncing the funeral oration of the Barricini, Brandolaccio hastily conducted Orso, Chilina, and the dog Brusco, towards the mâquis of La Stazzona.

[1] Should any incredulous sportsman question my veracity in narrating M. Della Rebbia's double shot, I would beg of him to go to Sartène, and hear the story told of the manner in which one of the most distinguished and amiable inhabitants of that town extricated himself singly, and with his left arm broken, from a position at least as perilous.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Meanwhile Colomba had learned by her spies, shortly after Orso's departure, that the Barricini were afield, and from that moment she was a prey to intense anxiety. She was seen running all over the house, now going into the kitchen, now visiting the chambers prepared for her expected guests, doing nothing and always in a bustle; stopping every moment to see if she could not discern any unusual movement in the village. About eleven o'clock a tolerably numerous cavalcade entered Pietranera, consisting of the colonel, his daughter, their servants, and a guide. Colomba's first word as she received them was, "Have you seen my brother?" She then asked the guide what road they had taken, and at what o'clock they had set out, and from the answers he gave, she was quite at a loss to understand why they had not met.

"Perhaps your brother took the upper road," said the guide, "we came by the lower."

Colomba shook her head, and went on with her questions. In spite of her natural resolution, seconded by the pride that forbade her to display any weakness before strangers, she was unable to conceal her uneasiness, which was soon shared by the colonel, and above all by Miss Nevil, when she had informed them of the attempt at reconciliation that had been made, and with what ill success. Miss Nevil, fretful and restless, wanted to have messengers sent off in every direction, and her father offered to mount his horse again, and go with the guide in search of Orso. The alarm of her guests recalled Colomba to a sense of her duties, as mistress of the mansion. She forced herself to smile,

pressed the colonel to sit down to breakfast, and found twenty plausible reasons to account for her brother's delay, every one of which she herself demolished in the next breath. The colonel too, thinking it incumbent on him as a man to keep up the spirits of the ladies, offered his own explanation of the matter.

"I'll warrant," he said, "Della Rebbia has fallen in with game, and could not resist the temptation; we shall see him return with his bag full. And, by jove! now I think of it, we heard four shots as we were coming along. Two of them were louder than the others, and I said to my daughter, I'll bet any money that's Della Rebbia shooting. It can only be my gun that makes so much noise."

Colomba turned pale, and Lydia, who watched her closely, readily guessed the nature of the suspicions which the colonel's conjecture had suggested to her. After a silence of some minutes, Colomba eagerly inquired whether the two loud reports had preceded or followed the others. But neither the colonel, nor his daughter, nor the guide, had paid attention to this capital point.

About one o'clock, none of the messengers sent out by Colomba having returned, she rallied all her courage and forced her guests to sit down to table; but, excepting the colonel, no one could touch a morsel. Upon the least noise in the Place, Colomba ran to the window, then returned sadly to her seat, and struggled more sadly still to keep up with her friends an insignificant conversation, to which no one paid the least attention, and which was interrupted by long intervals of silence.

Suddenly the gallop of a horse was heard. "Ah! this time it is my brother," said Colomba, starting up. But seeing Chilina mounted astride on Orso's horse, she cried out in agony, "My brother is dead!"

The colonel's glass fell from his hand, Miss Nevil shrieked, and all three ran to the house-door. Before Chilina could

throw herself from the saddle, Colomba had caught her up like a feather, with a suffocating gripe. The child understood her terrible look, and the first words she uttered were those of the chorus in *Otello*, "He lives!" Colomba relaxed her grasp, and Chilina dropped on her feet as nimbly as a kitten.

"The others?" inquired Colomba, hoarsely.

Chilina made the sign of the cross, with the fore and middle finger. A deep flush instantly overspread the deadly paleness of Colomba's features. She cast a fiery glance at the house of the Barricini, and said, with a smile, to her guests, "Let us go back and have our coffee."

The Iris of the bandits had a long story to tell. Her patois, translated into Italian, such as it was, by Colomba, and then into English by Miss Nevil, extorted many an imprecation from the colonel, and many a sigh from Miss Nevil; but Colomba listened with an air of impassibility, excepting that she twisted her damask napkin all to shreds. She interrupted the child five or six times, to make her repeat that Brandolaccio had said the wound was not dangerous and that he had seen many such a one in his time. At the conclusion of her tale, Chilina related that Orso urgently demanded writing paper, and that he desired his sister to entreat a lady, who was probably in his house, not to go away till she should have received a letter from him. "That was what he was most distressed about," said the child. "I was already on my way, when he called me back to bid me be particular about this message. It was the third time he repeated it to me." Colomba smiled slightly at hearing this injunction of her brother's, and squeezed the hand of the English lady, who burst into tears, and did not deem it expedient to translate this part of the narrative for her father's benefit.

"Yes, you will remain with me, my dear friend," cried Colomba, embracing Miss Nevil; "and you will assist us."

Then bringing out a quantity of old linen from a press, she

began to cut it up for bandages and lint. To see her flashing eyes, her heightened colour, and her alternate intensity of emotion and cool self-possession, it would have been hard to say, whether she was more affected by her brother's wound or delighted at the death of her enemies. At one moment she poured out coffee for the colonel, boasting to him of her skill in preparing it; at another she gave out work to Miss Nevil and Chilina, urging them to the task of sewing together and rolling up bandages. Twenty times she inquired whether Orso was suffering much pain from his wound. Every now and then she would stop in the middle of her work to remark to the colonel, "Two men so expert! so terrible! Alone, and wounded, with one arm disabled, to bring them both down! What courage, colonel! Is he not a hero? Oh! Miss Nevil, how happy one is to live in a quiet country like yours! I am sure you did not know my brother!—I knew it would be so, I said, 'The falcon will awake anon!' You were deceived by the gentleness of his manner. Because when near you, Miss Nevil. . . Oh! if he saw you working for him—poor Orso!"

Miss Nevil scarcely worked, and had not a word to say. Her father inquired why informations were not forthwith laid before a magistrate. He talked of the coroner's inquest, and of many other things equally unknown in Corsica; and lastly, he desired to know whether the country-house of that worthy M. Brandolaccio, who had given his assistance to the wounded man, was very far from Pietranera, and could he not go himself and see his friend.

Colomba replied with her habitual calmness, that Orso was in the mâquis; that he was under the care of a bandit, and that he would run great risk if he showed himself before he was assured how the prefect and the judges were disposed; and lastly, that she would take measures to have a skilful surgeon secretly conducted to him. "Above all, colonel," she said, "be sure and remember that you heard the four shots, and that you

told me Orso fired last." The colonel could make neither head nor tail of the matter, and his daughter did nothing but sigh and wipe her eyes.

The day was now far advanced, when a mournful procession entered the village, bringing home to the elder Barricini the corpses of his sons, each laid across a mule led by a peasant. The dismal train was followed by a crowd of retainers of the family and idlers. Among them were the gendarmes, who always make their appearance too late, and the deputy mayor, with his hands uplifted to heaven, exclaiming, "What will M. le préfet say?" Some women, among whom was Orlanduccio's nurse, tore their hair and uttered savage yells. But their noisy grief made less impression on the beholders than the mute despair of a person who attracted every eye. This was the unhappy father, who going from one body to the other, raised the dust-stained heads, kissed the livid lips, and sustained the stiffened limbs, as if to protect them from the joltings of the journey. Sometimes his lips were seen to open as if he was about to speak, but not a cry, not a word escaped him. With his eyes riveted on the dead bodies of his children, he tottered on, stumbling against trees, stones, and every obstacle in his way.

When they arrived in front of Orso's house, the lamentations of the women and the imprecations of the men became redoubled. Some Rebbianist goatherds having ventured to raise a shout of triumph, the indignation of their adversaries knew no bounds. A cry of "Vengeance! Vengeance!" was raised. Stones were flung, and two shots, fired at the windows of the room in which Colomba and her guests were seated, broke the shutters, and sent the splinters flying as far as the table at which the two ladies were. Miss Nevil shrieked, the colonel caught up a gun, and Colomba, before he could stop her, rushed to the house-door, and threw it open impetuously. Standing on the raised threshold, with both hands stretched out in the attitude of invoking curses on her enemies, "Cowards!" she

exclaimed, "you fire on women, on strangers! Are you Corsicans? Are you men? Dastards, who can only assassinate from behind, come on! I defy you. I am alone: my brother is away. Kill me, kill my guests; it is worthy of you. You dare not, cowards that you are! You know that we revenge ourselves. Get you gone, go weep like women, and thank us for not demanding more blood of you."

There was something in Colomba's voice and attitude that awed and subdued the beholders: the crowd fell back terror-stricken before her, as at the aspect of one of those malignant fairies, of whom many a fearful tale is told in the winter evenings in Corsica. The deputy-mayor, the gendarmes, and some of the women present, took advantage of the incident to throw themselves between the two hostile parties; for the Rebbianist goatherds were getting ready their weapons, and for a moment there seemed reason to fear that a general conflict would occur in the Place. But the two factions were without their chiefs, and the Corsicans, disciplined in their rage, seldom come to blows in the absence of the principal authors of their intestine wars. Moreover, Colomba, rendered prudent by success, restrained her little garrison. "Leave these poor people to their tears," she said; "leave the old man free to fetch away his carrion. What's the good of killing the old fox now that he has no teeth left to bite with? Giudice Barricini! remember the second of August! Remember the bloody pocket-book in which you wrote with your forger's hand! My father had entered your debt in it; your sons have paid it. I give you a receipt in full, old Barricini!"

With her arms folded, and a scornful smile on her lips, Colomba looked on while the two corpses were carried into the house of her enemies, after which the crowd slowly dispersed. She then closed her door, and going back to the parlour, she said to the colonel,

"I heartily beg pardon of you, sir, for my countrymen; never

could I have supposed that Corsicans would fire on a house where there were strangers; I blush for my country."

In the evening, Miss Nevil having retired to her chamber, the colonel followed her thither, and asked her if they would not do well to take their departure the next day from a village where one ran the risk every moment of receiving a ball in the head, and to quit with all possible speed a country where nothing was to be seen but murder and treachery.

It was some time before Miss Nevil replied, and it was evident her father's proposal caused her no little embarrassment. At last she said—"How could we think of quitting this unfortunate girl at a moment when she stands in such need of comfort and support? Don't you think, papa, it would be very cruel on our part?"

"It is on your account I speak, my dear," said the colonel; "if I knew that you were safe in the hotel at Ajaccio, I assure you I should be sorry to quit this infernal island without having shaken hands with that brave fellow, Della Rebbia."

"Well, papa, let us wait a little longer, and make ourselves perfectly certain before we go that we cannot render them any service."

"Good girl!" said the colonel, kissing his daughter's forehead. "I like to see you thus disregarding your own comforts to soothe the misfortunes of others. Let us stay then. No one ever has reason to repent of having done a good action."

Miss Nevil tossed about in her bed unable to sleep. Sometimes she thought the vague sounds she heard announced an attack on the house; sometimes, reassured as to her own safety, she thought of the poor wounded sufferer, stretched probably at that hour on the cold ground, without other aid than such as he might derive from the charity of a bandit. She pictured him to herself covered with blood, writhing in anguish; and, what is strange, every time Orso's image presented itself to her mind, he appeared to her as she had seen him at the moment

of his departure from Ajaccio, pressing the talisman she had given him to his lips. Then she thought of his bravery. She said to herself that it was for her sake, to see her a little sooner, he had exposed himself to the terrible danger he had just escaped; a little more and she would have persuaded herself that it was in her defence Orso had had his arm broken. She reproached herself for his wound, but she admired him for it all the more; and if the famous right and left shot had not as much merit in her eyes as in those of Brandolaccio and Colomba, she was, nevertheless, of opinion, that few heroes of romance would have displayed so much intrepidity and so much coolness in a moment of such extreme peril.

The bedroom she occupied was Colomba's. On the wall, over a sort of oak oratory, and beside a consecrated palm branch hung a miniature of Orso in the uniform of a sub-lieutenant. Miss Nevil took the miniature down, contemplated it long and earnestly, and at last laid it beside her instead of putting it back in its place. It was near daybreak when she fell asleep, and the sun had risen high above the horizon when she awoke. Before her bed stood Colomba, waiting motionless till she should open her eyes.

"Well, mademoiselle, you fare but badly, I fear, in our poor house," said Colomba. "I am afraid you have hardly slept."

"Have you had any news of him, my dear?" inquired Miss Nevil, sitting up. Her eye lighted on Orso's portrait, and she hastily threw her handkerchief over it to conceal it.

"Yes, I have news of him," said Colomba, smiling. Then taking up the miniature, "Do you think it a good likeness?" she asked, "He is better looking than that."

"Dear me!" replied Miss Nevil, quite confused. "I took it down without thinking. I have a sad habit of touching everything, and settling nothing.—How is your brother?"

"Pretty well. Giocanto came here before four o'clock this morning. He brought me a letter—for you, Miss Nevil; Orso

has not written to me. To be sure there is on the address, "To Colomba;" but underneath, "For Miss N——." Sisters are not jealous. Giocanto says he suffered a great deal in writing it. Giocanto, who is a superb penman, offered to write at his dictation, but my brother would not hear of it. He wrote with a pencil, lying on his back. Brandolaccio held the paper. My brother was every moment striving to rise up, and then the least movement caused him shocking pain in his arm. It was piteous, Giocanto said. Here is his letter."

Miss Nevil read the letter, which was written in English, no doubt from excess of caution. It ran thus:

"Mademoiselle,—An unfortunate fatality has fallen upon me. I know not what my enemies will say, or what calumnies they will invent; still it matters little to me, if you, mademoiselle, do not give them credit. From the time I became acquainted with you, I had lapped myself in idle dreams. It needed the shock of this catastrophe to wake me from my folly: I am rational now. I know the future that is before me, and it will find me resigned. That ring you gave me, and which I regarded as a talisman of happiness, I dare no longer keep. I fear, Miss Nevil, you repent of having bestowed your gift so ill, or rather, I fear its recalling to my mind the time when I was mad. Colomba will return it to you.—Farewell, mademoiselle, you are about to quit Corsica, and I shall never see you again; but say to my sister, that I still possess your esteem. I am bold to say I still deserve it. O. D. R."

Miss Nevil had turned aside to read this letter, and Colomba, who stood watching her attentively, handed her the Egyptian ring with a look that asked what it all meant. But Miss Nevil dared not look up, but fixed her eyes sadly on the ring, which she drew on and off her finger alternately.

"Dear Miss Nevil," said Colomba, "may I not know what my brother says to you? Does he tell you how he is?"

"Why," said Miss Nevil, blushing, "he does not say anything about it.—His letter is in English—he bids me tell my father—he hopes the prefect will be able to settle—"

Colomba smiling slily sat down on the bed, took hold of both Miss Nevil's hands, and bending her keen eyes upon her said, "Will you be good-natured? You will answer my brother's letter, will you not? It will do him so much good. I was about to waken you when his letter arrived, but I thought it better not."

"You were very wrong," said Miss Nevil, "if a line from me could——"

"Just now I cannot send him any letters. The prefect is come, and Pietranera is full of his men. By-and-by we will see what can be done. Oh! if you knew my brother, Miss Nevil, you would love him as I do. He is so good! so brave! Only think of what he did! Alone against two, and wounded!"

The prefect had returned. Having received an express from the deputy-mayor, he had arrived, accompanied by gendarmes and soldiers, and bringing with him, moreover, the public prosecutor and his suite, to make inquiries as to the last crowning catastrophe in the feud between the families of Pietranera. Shortly after his arrival, he saw Colonel Nevil and his daughter, and did not conceal from them his fears that the affair would assume an ugly shape. "You know," he said, "that the fight took place without witnesses, and so well established was the reputation of the two unfortunate young men for skill and courage, that no one will believe M. Della Rebbia can have killed them without the aid of the bandits, with whom they say he has taken refuge."

"It is impossible," exclaimed the colonel: "Orso Della Rebia is a brave and honourable lad. I will answer for him."

"I believe it," said the prefect, "but the public prosecutor—these gentlemen are always suspicious—does not appear to me very favourably disposed He has in his hands a document that tells badly for your friend, a threatening letter to Orlan-

duccio, in which he assigns him a rendezvous, and in the opinion of the public prosecutor that rendezvous looks like an ambuscade."

"This Orlanduccio," said the colonel, "refused to fight like a man of honour."

"It is not the custom here. People lie in wait and kill from behind, such is the fashion of the country. There is, to be sure, one favourable deposition, that of a child, who states that she heard four reports, the last two of which were louder than the others. These must have been made by a gun with a wide bore like M. Della Rebbia's. Unfortunately, the child is the niece of one of the bandits who is suspected of being implicated in the affair, and it is thought she has had her lesson taught her."

"Monsieur," said Miss Nevil, blushing to the whites of her eyes, "we were on the road when the shots were fired, and we heard the same thing."

"Indeed? That is important. And you, colonel, of course you remarked this?"

"Yes," said Miss Nevil, eagerly, "it was my father, who is familiar with arms, that said, 'There's M. Della Rebbia firing with the gun I gave him.'"

"And those shots you recognised were decidedly the last?"

"The last two. Was it not so, papa?"

The colonel had not a very good memory; but it was not his habit on any occasion to contradict his daughter.

"We must speak of this to the public prosecutor, colonel," said the prefect. "We expect a surgeon too this evening, who will examine the bodies, and ascertain if the wounds were inflicted with the weapon in question."

"It was I who gave it to Orso," said the colonel, "I wish it had been at the bottom of the sea—that is—the brave lad! I am very glad he had it, as but for my Manton I hardly know how he would have come off."

CHAPTER XIX.

It was rather late when the surgeon arrived. He had had an adventure of his own on the way. Having been met by Giocanto Castriconi, he had been called on with the greatest politeness to go and render his professional aid to a wounded man. He had been taken to see Orso, and had dressed his wounded arm ; after which the bandit had escorted him back a considerable distance, and greatly edified him by his discourse about the most famous professors in Pisa, who, he said, were his intimate friends.

"Doctor," said the theologian, as he took leave of him, "such is the high opinion I have conceived of you, I think it unnecessary to remind you that a physician should be as discreet as a confessor." Here he played with the lock of his gun, making it click two or three times. "You have forgotten the place where we have had the honour of seeing you. Adieu! delighted to have made your acquaintance."

Colomba entreated the colonel to be present at the examination of the bodies. "You are better acquainted than any one else," she said, "with my brother's gun, and your presence will be very useful. Besides, there are so many bad people here, that we should run great risks if we had no one to defend our interests."

Being left alone with Miss Nevil, she complained of a violent headache, and proposed a walk a little way beyond the village. "The air will do me good," she said; "it is such a long time since I have enjoyed it." She talked of her brother all the way, and Miss Nevil, who was not a little interested in that subject of

conversation, did not perceive she was wandering far from Pietranera. The sun was setting when she made the remark, and proposed to Colomba that they should return. Colomba knew a short cut, which she said would save them a good deal of ground, and presently she struck into another path, apparently much less frequented than that on which they had been walking. It soon led them up so abrupt a slope, that Colomba was obliged continually to cling with one hand to branches of trees for support, while with the other she pulled her companion after her. After a long quarter of an hour spent in this toilsome ascent, they reached a small plateau covered with arbutus and myrtle, and surrounded on all sides with projecting masses of granite. Miss Nevil was greatly fatigued; there was no appearance of the village, and it was almost night.

"Do you know, my dear Colomba," she said, "I am afraid we have lost our way."

"Never fear," replied Colomba. "Come along, follow me."

"But I assure you, you are mistaken; the village cannot be on that side. Upon my word I think we are turning our backs upon it. See those lights a long way off, I am sure that is Pietranera."

"My dear friend," said Colomba, while her voice faltered and her manner was agitated, "you are right; but two hundred paces from here—in this mâquis—"

"Well?"

"My brother is there: I might see him and embrace him if you pleased."

Miss Nevil made a gesture of surprise.

"I have got away from Pietranera," Colomba continued, "because I was with you; otherwise I should have been followed. To be so near him and not see him! Why not come with me to my poor brother? It would be such a pleasure to him!"

"But, Colomba—it would not be becoming."

"I understand. You ladies from the towns are always teas-

ing yourselves about what may or may not be becoming; we villagers think only of what is right."

"But it is so late. And your brother, what will he think of me?"

"He will think he is not forsaken by his friends, and that will give him courage to bear his sufferings."

"My father, too, will be so uneasy—"

"He knows you are with me. Well! make up your mind. You were looking at his portrait this morning," she said, with a cunning smile.

"No, indeed, Colomba, I dare not—those bandits—"

"Well! those bandits don't know you; what matter about them? You wished to see some of them!"

"What shall I do?"

"Come, mademoiselle, make up your mind one way or the other. To leave you here alone is out of the question; there is no knowing what might happen. Let us go and see Orso, or, if you insist, let us go back together to the village. I shall see my brother—God knows when—perhaps never."

"What do you say, Colomba? Well, let us go then; but only for one minute, and then return immediately."

Colomba squeezed her hand, and without answering a word, set off at so rapid a pace that Miss Nevil could hardly keep up with her. Fortunately, Colomba soon stopped, saying to her companion, "Let us go no further till we have given them notice, as we might chance to be shot." She then whistled through her fingers; presently a dog barked, and the advanced sentinel of the bandits was not long in making his appearance. This was our old acquaintance, the dog Brusco, who instantly recognised Colomba, and took upon himself to act as her guide. After many windings among the narrow paths of the mâquis, they fell in with two men armed to the teeth.

"Is that you, Brandolaccio?" said Colomba. "Where is my brother?"

"Down yonder," replied the bandit. "But move forward softly; he is asleep for the first time since his accident. *Vive Dieu!* It is plain that where the devil gets through, a woman will also make her way."

The two ladies advanced cautiously, and near to a fire, the light of which had been prudently concealed by raising a little wall of dry stones round it, they found Orso stretched on a heap of fern and covered with a cloak. He was very pale, and his laboured breathing was quite audible. Colomba sat down beside him and gazed on him with her hands folded as if in inward prayer. Miss Nevil pressed close to her, covering her face with her handkerchief, but now and then raising her head to look at the wounded man over Colomba's shoulder. A quarter of an hour elapsed before a word was spoken. At a sign from the theologian, Brandolaccio had withdrawn with him into the thick of the mâquis, to the great satisfaction of Miss Nevil, who, for the first time, thought the bushy beards and the wild equipment of the bandits had too much of the reality about them.

At last Orso stirred. Colomba instantly leaned over him and kissed him repeatedly, overwhelming him with questions about his wound, his sufferings, and his wants. After answering her that he was as well as he could expect to be, Orso inquired of her in his turn whether Miss Nevil was still at Pietranera, and if she had written to him. Colomba bending over her brother completely concealed her companion from his view; besides the darkness was such that he could hardly have recognised her. She held Miss Nevil's hand in one of her own, and with the other gently raised Orso's head.

"No, brother, she has not given me a letter for you. You are always thinking of Miss Nevil, you love her then dearly?"

"Love her, Colomba! But she—perhaps she despises me now!"

At this point in the conversation Miss Nevil made an effort to withdraw her hand, but it was not an easy matter to break

from Colomba's grasp. Her hand, though small and beautifully formed, possessed a strength of which we have seen some proofs.

"Despise you!" exclaimed Colomba, "after what you have done. On the contrary, she speaks highly of you. Ah! Orso, I could tell you a great deal about her." The hand was always struggling to escape, but Colomba continued drawing it nearer and nearer to Orso.

"But after all," said the wounded man, "why not reply to me? One single line and I should have been happy."

By dint of pulling Miss Nevil's hand, Colomba contrived at last to place it in that of her brother. Then suddenly starting aside, with a burst of laughter, "Take care, Orso, how you speak ill of Miss Nevil," she said, "for she understands Corsican very well."

Miss Nevil immediately drew back her hand, and stammered out some unintelligible words. Orso thought he was dreaming.

"You here, Miss Nevil," said he. "Good heavens, how could you venture? Oh, how happy you make me!" And raising himself up with difficulty, he tried to draw near to her.

"I came with your sister," said Miss Nevil, "that it might not be suspected where she was going—and then—I wished too—to satisfy myself. Oh, what a wretched state you are in here!"

Colomba had seated herself behind Orso. She cautiously raised him up, so as to rest his head on her lap. She put her arms round his neck, and beckoned to Miss Nevil to draw near. "Nearer, nearer!" she said; "it is not good for a sick man to raise his voice too high." And as Miss Nevil still hesitated, she caught her by the hand, and forced her to sit down so close beside them, that her dress touched Orso, and her hand, which Colomba never let go, rested on the invalid's shoulder.

"He is very comfortable so," said Colomba, gaily. "Eh, Orso! It is very pleasant bivouacking in the mâquis on a lovely night like this, is it not?"

"Oh yes, it is a lovely night indeed," said Orso. "I shall never forget it."

"How you must suffer," remarked Miss Nevil.

"I no longer replied," said Orso, "and I would willingly die here." And his right hand approached Miss Nevil's, which Colomba still kept prisoner.

"You must by all means be carried to some place where you can be taken care of, M. Della Rebbia," said Miss Nevil. "I shall never be able to sleep now that I have seen you lying in such a wretched way in the open air—"

"If I had not been afraid to meet you, Miss Nevil, I would have endeavoured to return to Pietranera, and surrender myself a prisoner."

"And why were you afraid of meeting her, Orso?" said Colomba.

"I had disobeyed you, Miss Nevil, and I durst not see you."

"Do you know, Miss Nevil, you make my brother do just whatever you please?" said Colomba, laughing. "I will put a stop to your seeing him."

"I hope," said Miss Nevil, "that this unfortunate affair is on the point of being cleared up, and that you will soon have nothing more to fear. I shall be very happy to know before we leave the island, that justice has been done you, and that your honour is as fully admitted as your courage."

"You are going, then, Miss Nevil! Do not, however, say so yet."

"Why, you know my father cannot continue shooting for ever. He wishes to leave."

On hearing her say this, Orso let the hand that touched Miss Nevil's fall listlessly, and there was a momentary silence.

"Pooh! pooh!" said Colomba, "we will not let you go yet. We have a great many things still to show you at Pietranera. Besides you promised to take my likeness, and you have not made a beginning. And then I have promised to make you a

'serenata' in seventy-five couplets. And then—Whatever is Brusco growling at? Here comes Brandolaccio running after him. Let us see what it is."

She rose suddenly, and laying Orso's head without ceremony on Miss Nevil's knees, she ran to meet the bandits.

Rather astonished at finding herself thus supporting a handsome young man, and tête-à-tête with him in the middle of a mâquis, Miss Nevil did not know what to do, for she was afraid of hurting the invalid if she withdrew suddenly. But Orso quitted of his own accord the pleasant support his sister had just given him, and propping himself on his right arm, said, "So you are going very soon, Miss Nevil? I had never supposed you would make a long stay in this wretched country; and yet since you are come here I suffer a hundred times more when I think I must bid you adieu. I am a poor lieutenant, with no prospects, and at this instant proscribed. What a moment, Miss Nevil, to tell you that I love you; but it is no doubt the only time I shall ever be able to breathe the word to you, and I feel as though I were less unhappy, now that I have unburdened my heart."

Miss Nevil turned away her head, as if the darkness was not sufficient to conceal her blushes. "M. Della Rebbia," she said, with a faltering voice, "would I have come here if—" and as she spoke she placed the Egyptian talisman in Orso's hand. Then making a violent effort to resume her habitual tone of pleasantry, "It is very wrong of you, Monsieur Orso, to speak thus. In the midst of the mâquis, surrounded by your bandits, you know very well that I should never venture to be angry with you."

Orso leaned forward to kiss the hand that gave him back the talisman, and as Miss Nevil drew it away rather hastily, he lost his balance and fell on his wounded arm. He could not suppress a groan of anguish.

"Have I hurt you, dear Orso?" she cried, raising him up,

"it was my fault! oh pray forgive me." They continued conversing for some time in a low tone, and very close to each other. Colomba running up hastily found them in the precise position in which she had left them.

"The soldiers!" she cried out. "Orso, try if you can get up and walk; I will help you."

"Leave me," said Orso. "Tell the bandits to make their escape,—whether I am captured or not, matters little; but take Miss Nevil away: for heaven's sake do not let her be seen here!"

"I will not leave you," said Brandolaccio, who had followed Colomba. "The sergeant of the company is the barrister's godson: instead of arresting you he will kill you, and then he will say he did not do it on purpose."

Orso made an effort to rise, and moved a few steps forward: but soon stopping, said, "I cannot walk. Fly, all of you! Farewell, Miss Nevil; give me your hand, and farewell!"

"We will not leave you!" cried the two girls.

"If you can't walk," said Brandolaccio, "we must carry you. Come, cheer up, lieutenant; we shall have time to decamp by the ravine behind there. M. le curé will keep them busy a bit."

"No, leave me," insisted Orso, stretching himself on the ground. "For heaven's sake, Colomba, take Miss Nevil away."

"You are strong, Mademoiselle Colomba," continued Brandolaccio; "lay hold of him by the shoulders, I'll take his feet. Good! forward, march!"

They set off rapidly with him in spite of his protestations; and Miss Nevil was following them in a terrible fright, when a shot was heard, which was immediately responded to by five or six others. Miss Nevil screamed, Brandolaccio blurted out a curse, but redoubled his speed, and Colomba, following his example, continued to dash along through the mâquis, heedless of the branches that switched her face or tore her dress. "Stoop, stoop, my dear," she said to her companion, "or a ball may

strike you." The party had trotted along about five hundred paces in this manner, when Brandolaccio declared he was dead beat, and squatted himself down on the ground in spite of Colomba's exhortations and reproaches.

"Where is Miss Nevil?" asked Orso.

Miss Nevil, terrified by the firing, and impeded every moment by the thickness of the mâquis, had soon lost all trace of the fugitives, and found herself alone quite a prey to the greatest alarm.

"She is left behind," said Brandolaccio, "but she is not lost; the women always turn up again. Hark, Ors' Anton', to the row which the curé is kicking up with your gun. Unluckily he can't see twice the length of his piece before him, and there is no great execution to be done at sharpshooting by night."

"Hush!" cried Colomba, "I hear a horse; we are saved."

And so it proved; a horse grazing in the mâquis had been frightened by the firing, and was escaping in the direction of the fugitives.

"We are saved!" echoed Brandolaccio. To intercept the horse, seize him by the mane, and pass a cord by way of a bridle into his mouth, was for the bandit, aided by Colomba, the work of a moment. "Now let us warn the curé," he said. He whistled twice, a distant whistle responded to the signal, and the loud voice of the Manton was heard no more. Brandolaccio then sprang on the horse's back; Colomba placed her brother before him, and the bandit grasping him firmly with one hand, directed the animal with the other. The horse, urged by two stout kicks from Brandolaccio's heel, set off briskly in spite of his double load, and galloped down a rugged descent, where any horse but a Corsican one would have broken his neck a hundred times.

Colomba then retraced her steps, calling after Miss Nevil as loud as she could, but no voice replied to hers. After wandering at random for some time, endeavouring to recover the path she

had first taken, she fell in with two soldiers who shouted to her, "Who goes there?"

"Well, gentlemen," said Colomba, jeeringly, "here's a terrible to-do. How many are there killed?"

"You were with the bandits," said one of the soldiers, "and will have to come with us."

"With all my heart," she answered, "but I have a friend here, and must find her first of all."

"Your friend is already taken, and you will go to prison along with her."

"To prison! We shall see. Meanwhile take me to her."

The soldiers conducted her to the encampment of the bandits, where they collected the trophies of their victory, that is to say, the cloak that had covered Orso, an old pan, and a pitcher of water. Miss Nevil, half dead with fright, stood a prisoner in the midst of the soldiers, replying only with tears to all their inquiries respecting the number of the bandits, and the route they had taken.

Colomba threw herself into her friend's arms, and whispered in her ear, "They are safe." Then, turning to the sergeant of the troop, "Monsieur," she said, "you see plainly that mademoiselle knows nothing of what you are questioning her about. Let us return to the village, where we are anxiously expected."

"Ay, we'll take you there, and sooner than you wish, my charmer, and you'll have to account for your business in the mâquis at this time of night with the bandits who have just escaped. I don't know what conjuring these rascals employ, but to a certainty they put a spell upon the petticoats, for wherever there are bandits there are sure to be girls, and pretty ones too."

"You are gallant, Signor sergeant," said Colomba, "but you had better take care what you say. This lady is a relation of the prefect's, and is not to be joked with."

"A relation of the prefect's!" whispered one of the soldiers to his officer; "sure enough she wears a bonnet."

"The bonnet does not matter," said the sergeant. "They were both of them with the curé, who is the greatest wheedler in the country, and it is my duty to bring them along. There is no use in our stopping here any longer. But for that infernal corporal Taupin—the drunken dog of a Frenchman must let himself be seen before I had surrounded the mâquis,—otherwise we had them all as safe as in a net."

"There are seven of you, are there not?" observed Colomba. "Do you know, gentlemen, if the three brothers Gambini, Sarocchi, and Theodore Poli, should chance to be at St. Christina's cross with Brandolaccio and the curé, they might cut you out some warm work. If you are to have a conversation with the commandant of the campagna,[1] I would rather not be present at it. Bullets make no distinction of persons by night."

The possibility of an encounter with the formidable bandits enumerated by Colomba, seemed to make an impression on the soldiers. The sergeant, with many an imprecation against corporal Taupin, the dog of a Frenchman, gave the word to retreat, and his little troop took the road to Pietranera, carrying off with them the cloak and the pan. As for the pitcher, summary justice was executed upon it with a kick. A soldier was going to take hold of Miss Nevil by the arm, but Colomba pushed him back. "Let no one touch her!" she said. "Do you suppose we want to run away? Come, Lydia, my dear, lean on me, and do not cry like a child. We have met with an adventure, but it will not turn out badly: in half an hour we shall be at supper. For my part, I am dying of hunger."

"What will people think of me?" whispered Miss Nevil.

"They will think you lost your way, that's all."

"But what will the prefect say!—What will my father say above all?"

[1] The title assumed by Theodore Poli.

"The prefect? You will tell him to mind his prefecture. As for your father, why, from the manner in which you were chatting with Orso just now, I should have thought you had something to say to him." Miss Nevil squeezed her friend's arm but said nothing.

"Is not my brother worthy to be loved?" continued Colomba. "Confess now, you love him a little, do you not?"

"Ah! Colomba," replied Miss Nevil, smiling in spite of her confusion, "you have betrayed me, I who placed such confidence in you."

Colomba put her arm round Lydia's waist, and kissing her on the forehead, whispered very softly, "Will you forgive me, my dear little sister?"

"I suppose I must, my terrible sister," replied Lydia, returning the kiss.

The prefect and the public prosecutor had taken up their abode with the deputy-mayor of Pietranera, and the colonel, whose uneasiness about his daughter was very great, was just visiting them for the twentieth time to inquire if they had heard anything about her, when a soldier, sent forward by the sergeant, related to them the terrible engagement that had been fought with the bandits, an engagement in which there had been, indeed, neither killed nor wounded, but in which there had been captured a pan, a cloak, and a couple of girls, who, he said, were the mistresses or the spies of the bandits. The two prisoners, thus announced, presently made their appearance in the midst of their armed escort. The reader may picture to himself the triumphant expression of Colomba's features, her companion's shame, the prefect's surprise, and the delight and astonishment of the colonel. The public prosecutor, like a wicked slyboots as he was, made poor Lydia undergo an examination, which did not end till he had put her quite out of countenance.

"It strikes me," said the prefect, "that we may discharge

the prisoners. These young ladies have been for a walk, a very natural thing in such fine weather; and they have fallen in by chance with a very interesting wounded young gentleman, a natural enough thing likewise." Then, taking Colomba aside, "Mademoiselle," he said, "you may send word to your brother that his affair is taking a better turn than I expected. The examination of the bodies, coupled with the colonel's deposition, proved that he only acted in self-defence, and that he was alone at the moment of the fight. All will be well, but he must quit the mâquis without delay, and surrender himself a prisoner."

It was near eleven when the colonel, his daughter, and Colomba sat down to a nearly cold supper. Colomba ate with a good appetite, making fun of the prefect, the public prosecutor, and the soldiers. The colonel ate, without saying a word, but gazing continually at his daughter, who never took her eyes off her plate. At last he said in English, in a mild but serious tone of voice, "Lydia, so you are engaged to Della Rebbia?"

"Yes, papa, since this evening," she replied, blushing, but firmly. Then looking up, and not seeing any symptoms of displeasure in her father's face, she threw herself into his arms and embraced him, as is usual with well-bred young ladies on like occasions.

"With all my heart," said the colonel, "he is a brave lad; but, look you, Lydia, we will not remain in his infernal country! otherwise I refuse my consent."

"I don't understand English," observed Colomba, who was watching them with extreme curiosity, "but I shrewdly suspect I know what you are talking about."

"We have been talking," said the colonel, "of taking you a journey with us to Ireland."

"Ay, I am quite willing, and I will be sister Colomba. Is it settled, colonel? Shall we shake hands upon it?"

"People usually seal such bargains as this with a kiss," said the colonel.

CHAPTER XX

Some months after the double shot that plunged the community of Pietranera into consternation, as the newspapers say, a young man with his arm in a sling rode out from Bastia one afternoon towards the village of Cardo, celebrated for its fountain, which in summer furnishes the epicures of the town with a delicious water. He was accompanied by a tall and remarkably beautiful young woman, mounted on a little black horse, the fine figure and action of which would have delighted a judge of horse flesh, though one of its ears was unfortunately disfigured by some strange accident. On arriving in the village the young female alighted nimbly, and after having assisted her companion to dismount, she unstrapped a pair of rather heavy saddle-bags attached to her saddle. The horses were committed to the care of a peasant; and the young woman carrying the saddle-bags, and the young man armed with a double-barrelled gun, bent their steps towards the mountains, striking into a very steep path that did not appear to lead to any dwelling. Having reached one of the lofty plateaus of Mount Quercio, they stopped and sat down on the grass. They seemed to expect somebody, for they were continually looking towards the mountain, and the young woman frequently consulted a handsome gold watch, perhaps as much for the pleasure of contemplating a trinket she had not long been mistress of, as for the sake of knowing whether the time appointed for some meeting or another was come. They were not kept waiting long. A dog came out from the mâquis, and the young female having called out "Brusco!" it ran up and greeted them with many

friendly demonstrations. Shortly afterwards two men with long beards made their appearance, each with a gun under his arm, a cartridge box in his belt and a pistol by his side. Their patched and torn garments contrasted curiously with their polished weapons, the production of a manufacturer renowned all over the Continent. In spite of the apparent inequality of their social position the four persons in this scene accosted each other familiarly, and like old friends.

"Well, Ors' Anton'," remarked the elder of the bandits to the young man, "so your affair is settled and done with. I wish you joy. I am sorry the barrister is no longer in the island for one to see the rage he would be in. And how is your arm?"

"They tell me," replied the young man, "that in another fortnight I shall be able to lay aside my sling. Brando, my brave fellow, I am off to-morrow for Italy, and I wished to bid farewell to you, and to M. le curé; this was my reason for begging you to meet me."

"You are in a great hurry," said Brandolaccio; "you were acquitted yesterday, and you are off to-morrow!"

"Business, business to be attended to," exclaimed the young lady, gaily. "Gentlemen, I have brought you some supper; fall to, and do not forget my friend Brusco."

"You spoil Brusco, mademoiselle, but he is grateful: you shall see. Come, Brusco," said his master, holding out his gun horizontally, "jump for the Barricini!" The dog remained motionless, licking his nose and looking up at his master. "Jump for the Della Rebbias!" said the latter, and the dog jumped two feet higher than was necessary.

"Hark ye, my friends," said Orso, "yours is a bad trade; if you do not chance to end your career on that open space we see down yonder,[1] the best fate you can expect is to fall in the mâquis, by a bullet from the musket of a gendarme."

"Well," replied Castriconi, "a man can die but once, and

[1] The place where criminals are executed in Bastia.

better die so than by a fever that kills you in your bed amidst the whimperings, more or less sincere, of your heirs. When people are used, as we are, to the open air, there is nothing like dying in one's shoes, as our village folks say."

"I should be glad," Orso went on to observe, "to see you quit this country, and lead a more quiet life. For instance, why not go and settle in Sardinia, as several of your comrades have done? I could facilitate your removal."

"In Sardinia!" cried Brandolaccio. "*Istos Sardos!* The devil fly away with them and their patois. They won't do for us."

"There are no pleasurable resources in Sardinia," said the theologian. "For my part, I despise the Sardinians. I am told they have a mounted force for hunting down the bandits; the fact is decisive as to the character both of the bandits and of the country.[1] Out upon Sardinia! It is to me matter of astonishment, M. Della Rebbia, that you, who are a man of taste and judgment, have not adopted our mâquis life, after having once had a taste of it."

"But," said Orso, with a smile, "when I had the good fortune to be your messmate, I was hardly in a condition to appreciate the charms of your way of life, and my ribs ache to this hour when I think of the gallop I had one fine night, laid crossways like a sack on a bare-backed horse ridden by my friend Brandolaccio."

"And the pleasure of escaping from pursuit," rejoined Castriconi; "do you reckon that as nothing? How can you be insensible to the charms of freedom absolute and uncontrolled in a lovely climate like ours? With this *porte-respect* (pointing to his gun) a man is king over all around him, as far as it can carry a ball. He commands, he redresses wrongs. This is a very moral amusement, monsieur, and a very agreeable one,

[1] I am indebted for this criticism upon Sardinia to a friend of mine, an ex bandit, who alone is to be held responsible for the remark.

which we do not deny ourselves. Can any life surpass that of the knight errant, when he is better armed and more rational than Don Quixote? Listen to this :—The other day I learned that the uncle of little Lilla Luigi, the stingy old curmudgeon, would not give her a dowry; I wrote him a few lines, without threats, mind you; that is not my way. Well, behold you, here was a case of instantaneous conviction; the old fellow gave her a marriage-portion at once. I had made two beings happy. Take my word for it, Monsieur Orso, nothing is comparable to the bandit's life. Pooh! you would have made one of us most likely, were it not for a certain fair lady from England, of whom I have only had a glimpse, but who is the talk and the admiration of all Bastia."

"My sister-in-law that is to be, is not fond of the mâquis," said Colomba, laughing, "she was too much frightened in it."

"Finally, then, do you choose to remain here?" asked Orso. "Be it so. Tell me, is there anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing," answered Brandolaccio, "except to keep us a little in your kind recollection. You have loaded us with favours. There's Chilina has a fortune, and need not trouble my friend the curé to write letters without threats, to enable her to settle well in life. We know that your tenant will give us bread and powder in our need: so farewell. I hope to see you back again in Corsica one of these days."

"At a critical moment," said Orso, "a few pieces of gold are of great service. Now that we are old acquaintances you will not refuse this little cartridge which will help to procure you others."

"No money between us, lieutenant," exclaimed Brandolaccio, resolutely.

"Money is all-powerful in the world," observed Castriconi, "but in the mâquis, the only things prized are a brave heart and a gun that does not miss fire."

"I should be sorry to part from you," said Orso, "without

leaving you some token. Let's see, what can I leave you, Brando?"

The bandit scratched his head, and cast a side-long look at Orso's gun. "Why, then, lieutenant—if I might venture—but no, you set too much store by it."

"What is it you wish for?"

"Nothing—the thing itself is nothing—unless a body had the knack of using it as well. My head's always running upon that devil of a shot, right and left, and with only one hand. Oh! the thing's not to be done twice."

"It is this gun you wish for? I brought it with me to give it you. But use it as seldom as you can."

"Oh, I don't promise you to use it like you; but be assured when another shall own it, you may say for certain that Brando Savelli has turned up his toes."

"And you, Castriconi, what shall I give you?"

"Since you are positively resolved on leaving me a material reminiscence of yourself, I will, without ceremony, request you to send me a copy of Horace, of the smallest possible size. It will amuse me and prevent me from forgetting my Latin. There is a little body that sells cigars in Bastia, by the port, give it to her and she will convey it to me."

"You shall have an Elzevir edition of Horace; there happens to be one among the books I intended to take away with me. Well, my friends, we must separate. Let us shake hands. If ever you think seriously of Sardinia, write to me. N——, the barrister, will give you my address on the continent."

"Lieutenant," said Brando, "to-morrow when you are clear of the harbour, look up the mountain to this spot; we will be here and will make a signal to you with our handkerchiefs."

They separated; Orso and his sister took the road to Cardo, and the bandits turned back into the recesses of the mountain.

CHAPTER XXI.

One fine morning in April, Colonel Sir Thomas Nevil, his daughter, who had been made a bride some days before, Orso, and Colomba set out in a carriage from Pisa to visit an Etruscan subterranean chamber, recently discovered, which was an object of great curiosity to all foreigners. After they had been down into the interior of the monument, Orso and his wife set about copying the paintings on the walls; whilst the colonel and Colomba, neither of whom were much interested in archæology, left them to themselves and strolled about the environs.

"Colomba, my dear," said the colonel, "we shall never get back to Pisa in time for luncheon. Don't you feel hungry? It is all over with us now that Orso and his wife have got among these antiquities; when they once begin drawing together they never know when to leave off."

"Yes," said Colomba, "and yet they never bring home the least scrap of a drawing."

"I propose," continued the colonel, "that we go down to that little farm yonder. We shall get some bread there, and maybe a bottle of aleatico, and strawberries and cream, and so wile away the time till our antiquaries join us again."

"A very good idea, colonel. I don't see why you and I, who are the sensible people of the family, should make martyrs of ourselves for the sake of these turtle doves who live only on poetry. Give me your arm. I improve, don't I? I take a gentleman's arm, I wear fashionable bonnets and dresses; I have jewels; I learn I don't know how many fine things; I am

not at all a savage now. Only look with what grace I wear this shawl. That fresh complexioned young man, one of the officers in your regiment, who was at the wedding—Really I can't recollect his name; a tall, frizzleheaded fellow, I could knock down with a blow of my fist—"

"Chatworth?" suggested the colonel.

"Ay, that's the name," replied Colomba, "but I shall never pronounce it. Would you believe it! he is over head and ears in love with me."

"Aha, Colomba, you are growing a great coquette. We shall soon have another wedding."

"I marry! And who would bring up my nephew when Orso shall have given me one? Who would teach him to talk Corsican? Ay, he shall talk Corsican, and I will make him a pointed cap to set you all mad."

"Let us wait first till you have got a nephew, and then you shall teach him to handle a stiletto if you have a mind," remaked the colonel.

"Adieu to stilettos!" said Colomba, gaily; "I have a fan now to rap you over the knuckles with if you speak ill of my country."

Chatting in this way they reached the farm, where they found wine, strawberries, and cream. Colomba helped the woman of the house to gather the strawberries, whilst the colonel sat sipping aleatico. At the corner of an alley Colomba saw an old man seated on a straw chair, in the sun, an invalid as it seemed, for his cheeks were hollow, his eyes sunk; his emaciation was extreme, and his immobility, his paleness, and his fixed and vacant stare made him look more like a corpse than a living being.

Colomba gazed on him for several minutes so earnestly, that she attracted the attention of the good woman of the house. "This poor old man," she said, "is a countryman of yours, for I can see, from your speech, mademoiselle, that you are from

Corsica. He has had misfortunes in his own country: his sons came by their death in a frightful manner. They say, begging your pardon, mademoiselle, that your countrymen are not very merciful to their enemies. After that, this poor gentleman, left all alone, came over here to Pisa to a lady, a distant relation of his, who owns this farm. He isn't quite right in his head, poor dear soul, it's the grief you see. It put my mistress out of her way like to have him about her, for she sees a deal of company, so she sent him here. He is very quiet, and gives no trouble; he does not speak three words in a day. The doctor comes to see him once a week, and says he is not long for this world."

"Ha! he is condemned?" said Colomba. "In his condition it would be a blessing to be released."

"May be you'd speak a few words of Corsican to him, mademoiselle; it would rouse him up a bit mayhap to hear the language of his own country."

"We shall see," said Colomba, with a peculiar smile, and she advanced towards the old man until her shadow intercepted the sunshine from him. Upon this the poor idiot looked up and stared at Colomba, who in her turn gazed steadfastly at him, smiling all the while. Presently the old man passed his hand across his forehead and closed his eyes, as if to escape from Colomba's gaze. He then opened them again unnaturally wide; his lips quivered, he strove to stretch out his hands, but fascinated by Colomba he remained fixed in his chair, unable to speak or move. At last big tears rolled from his eyes, and a few sobs burst from his bosom.

"This is the first time I ever saw him so," observed the woman. "Mademoiselle is a young lady from your country; she is come to see you," she said to the old man.

"Mercy!" exclaimed the latter, with a hoarse and hollow voice; "mercy! are you not satisfied? That leaf—I burned—how did you contrive to read it? But why both? Orlanduccio

—you can't have read anything against him. You should have left me one—a single one—Orlanduccio—you did not see his name."

"I wanted them both," said Colomba, in a low voice, and in the Corsican dialect. "The branches are looped, and if the stem was not rotten I would have torn it up by the roots. Go, go, do not complain; you have not long to suffer. I suffered two years!"

The old man uttered a cry, and his head sank on his breast. Colomba turned her back on him, and slowly retraced her steps to the house, humming some words of a ballata:

"And vengeance claims, and, doubt ye not, will have its amplest meed,
The hand that shot, the eye that aimed, the heart that planned the deed."

Whilst the woman of the house was busily and anxiously rendering assistance to the old man, Colomba, with her cheeks flushed, and her eyes flashing fire, sat down at the table opposite the colonel.

"What is the matter?" said he, "you look just as you did at Pietranera the day they sent the bullets among us when we were at dinner."

"Some recollections of Corsica came into my head. But it is all over now. I shall be godmother, shall I not? O, what fine names I will give my nephew—Ghilfuccio Tomaso Orso Leone!"

The woman now entered the room. "Well!" said Colomba with the utmost coolness, "is the old man dead, or was it only a faint?"

"It was nothing, mademoiselle; but it is curious what an effect the sight of you had on him."

"The doctor, you tell me, says he has not long to live?"

"Not two months, perhaps."

"He will be no great loss."

"Who the deuce are you talking of?" inquired the colonel.

"An idiot from my country," said Colomba, with an air of indifference; "who is boarding here. I will send from time to time to inquire how he does. But I say, Colonel Nevil, do leave some strawberries for my brother and Lydia."

When Colomba left the farm to take her seat again in the carriage, the woman of the house followed her for some time with her eyes. "You see that very handsome young lady?" she said to her daughter, "well! as sure as you stand there, she has the evil eye."

CARMEN.

CHAPTER I.

I HAD always suspected geographers of not knowing what they say when they place the field of the battle of Munda in the country of the Bastuli-Pæni, near the modern Monda, some two leagues north of Marbella. According to my own conjectures on the text of the anonymous author of the "Bellum Hispaniense," and some information gathered in the excellent library of the Duke d'Ossnna, I thought that in the environs of Montilla must be sought the memorable spot on which, for the last time, Cæsar played double or quits against the champions of the Republic. Finding myself in Andalusia in the beginning of the autumn of 1830, I made quite a long excursion for the purpose of dispelling the doubts that I yet retained on this subject. A pamphlet that I shall soon publish will, I hope, no longer leave any uncertainty in the minds of honest archæologists. Meanwhile, until my dissertation shall at last solve the geographical problem that holds all learned Europe in suspense, I wish to relate a short story to you; in no degree can it bias the interesting question of the site of Munda.

At Cordova I hired a guide and two horses and started on my campaign, "Cæsar's Commentaries" and a few shirts comprising all my luggage. One day, whilst wandering over the elevated portion of the plain of Cachena, worn out with fatigue, dying of

thirst, scorched by an oppressive sun, I heartily sent Cæsar and the sons of Pompey to the deuce, when I perceived at some distance from the path I was following a patch of greensward overrun with reeds and rushes, which seemed to announce the neighbourhood of a spring. As I expected, I found on drawing near that the delusive sward was a marsh in which disappeared a rivulet seeming to come from a narrow gorge between two spurs of the chain of the Cabra Sierra. I concluded that in going higher up I should find fresher water, fewer leeches and frogs, and perhaps a little shade among the rocks. At the entrance of the gorge my horse neighed, and was immediately answered by another that I could not see. Hardly had I proceeded a hundred steps, when the ravine, suddenly widening, displayed to my view a sort of natural circus, completely shaded by the high cliffs surrounding it. It would be impossible to find a spot promising a more agreeable halt for a traveller. At the foot of perpendicular rocks the spring bubbled forth and fell into a little basin lined with snow-white sand. Five or six magnificent green oaks, always protected from the wind and watered by the stream, grew by its margin and sheltered it with their dense foliage, while around the basin, soft, rich grass offered a better bed than could have been found in any inn for ten leagues round.

But the honour of discovering so charming a resting-place did not belong to me, for a man was already reposing there when I reached it. Awakened by the neighing of the animals, he had risen and approached his horse, which had profited by his master's sleep to make a good repast of the surrounding herbage. He was a young fellow of middle size, but his appearance denoted great strength, and he possessed a sombre, proud look; his complexion, which might once have been fresh, had become, through exposure to the sun, darker than his hair. In one hand he held the animal's halter, in the other a brass blunderbuss, nd I acknowledge that at first his weapon and wild air some-

what surprised me; but I no longer believed in robbers, by reason of constantly hearing of them and never meeting them. Moreover, I had seen so many honest farmers arm themselves to the teeth to go to market, that the sight of his firearm did not justify me in questioning the morality of the stranger. "And then," thought I to myself, "what would he do with my shirts and my Elzevir edition of the 'Commentaries?'" I therefore saluted the possessor of the blunderbuss with a familiar nod, and asked smilingly if I had disturbed his slumbers. Without replying, he eyed me from head to foot, and then, as if satisfied with his examination, bestowed the same attention on my guide, who was approaching. I saw the latter grow pale, and stop in evident terror. "An unlucky meeting," said I to myself: but prudence immediately counselled me to manifest no uneasiness, so alighting, I told the guide to unbridle the horses, and kneeling on the brink of the streamlet, I plunged my head and hands in its delicious coolness, then took a long draught flat on my face, like the wicked soldiers of Gideon.

Meanwhile, however, I observed my guide and our unknown companion. While the former approached with evident unwillingness, the other seemed to have no evil designs against us, for he had restored his horse to liberty, and his weapon, at first held horizontally, was now pointed to the ground. Not thinking it worth while to take offence at such slight attention being paid to my presence, I stretched myself on the grass, and with an unconstrained air asked the man with the blunderbuss if he had a tinder box, at the same time drawing out my cigar case. Still without speaking, the stranger felt in his pocket for his tinder box, and hastened to strike me a light, evidently softened by my manner, for he seated himself opposite to me, but without laying aside his weapon. Having lighted my cigar, I chose the best one remaining and asked him if he smoked.

"Yes, Señor," he replied. They were the first words he had spoken, and I remarked that he did not pronounce the *s* in the

Andalusian way,[1] whence I concluded that he was merely a traveller like myself, only less of an archæologist.

"You will find this pretty good," I said, presenting him a genuine Havana regalia.

He made a slight inclination of the head, lighted his cigar at mine, thanked me with another nod, and began to smoke with evident pleasure. "Ah!" he exclaimed, allowing the first whiff to escape slowly through mouth and nostrils, "how long it is since I have smoked!"

In Spain, a cigar given and accepted establishes relations of hospitality, the same as to partake of bread and salt in the East. The fellow showed himself more talkative than I could have anticipated, yet, although he professed to be a native of the Montilla district, he seemed to know but little of the country; was ignorant of the name of the charming valley in which we then were; could not name any village in the neighbourhood; and, finally, when questioned as to whether he had not seen any ruined walls, large brimmed tiles and sculptured stones near by, he confessed that he had never paid attention to such matters. On the other hand, however, he proved himself an expert as regarded horses. He pointed out the defects of mine, which was not a difficult task; then he gave me the pedigree of his own, which came from the famous Cordovan stud: a noble animal indeed, so insensible to fatigue, his master pretended, as once to have covered thirty leagues in one day at gallop or full trot. In the midst of his tirade my unknown companion abruptly stopped, as if surprised and vexed at having said too much, and then resumed with some embarrassment—"I was in urgent haste to reach Cordova, having to appeal to the judges respecting a lawsuit." While speaking, he looked at my guide Antonio, who lowered his eyes.

[1] The Andalusians aspirate the *s*, and in pronunciation confound it with the soft *c* and *z*, which the Spaniards pronounce like the English *th*. By the single word *Señor* one may recognise an Andalusian.

The shade and the spring charmed me so much that, remembering some slices of excellent ham, placed by my Montilla friends in my guide's wallet, I ordered them to be produced, and invited the stranger to take part in the impromptu collation. If he had been long without smoking, it seemed probable that he had fasted for at least forty-eight hours; he ate like a famished wolf, and I could not but think that our meeting had been a providential one for the poor devil. My guide, however, ate but little, drank still less, and did not speak at all, although, at the commencement of our journey, he had revealed himself to me as an unparalleled chatterer. The presence of our guest seemed to trouble him, and a certain distrust kept them aloof from each other, without my being able to discover the reason.

Already the last crumbs of bread and ham had disappeared; we had each smoked a second cigar; I had ordered the guide to bridle our horses, and was about to take leave of my new friend, when he asked where I intended passing the night. Before noticing a sign from my guide, I replied that I should go to the Cuervo inn.

"A sorry lodging for a person like you, Señor, I also am going there, and, if you will permit me to accompany you, we will journey together."

"Very willingly," said I, mounting my horse. Antonio, who held my stirrup, again made signs to me with his eyes, to which I replied by a shrug of the shoulders, as if to assure him that I was perfectly at ease, and we proceeded on our way.

Antonio's mysterious signals, his uneasiness, some words that had escaped the stranger, especially his ride of thirty leagues and the scarcely plausible explanation he had given of it, had already settled my opinion as to the status of our travelling companion. There was no doubt that I had to deal with a smuggler, perhaps a robber. But what mattered it to me? I knew enough of the Spanish character to be very certain of hav-

ing nothing to fear from a man who had eaten and smoked with me. His presence itself was a sure protection against any ill adventure. Besides, I was glad to know what a brigand really was like; for one does not meet such a person every day, and there is a certain charm in finding one's self beside a dangerous man, especially when one discovers him to be peaceful and sociable.

I hoped by degrees to lead the stranger to confide in me, and, in spite of my guide's winks, I turned the conversation upon highway robbers, of whom I of course spoke with respect. There was then in Andalusia a notorious bandit, named José-Maria, whose exploits were in every mouth. "Suppose I am by his side!" thought I to myself. I related the wonderful stories that I had heard of this hero—all in his favour, moreover—and boldly expressed my admiration for his bravery and generosity.

"José-Maria is but a rogue," said the stranger coldly.

"Is he doing himself justice, or is it merely an excess of modesty on his part?" I mentally asked myself; for, by dint of closely observing my companion, I had become convinced that the description of José-Maria, that I had seen posted on the gates of many Andalusian towns, applied in every detail to him. "Yes, certainly, it is he—fair hair, blue eyes, large mouth, beautiful teeth, small hands, a linen shirt, a velvet jacket with silver buttons, white leather leggings, a bay horse.—Not a shadow of doubt! But let us respect his incognito."

We reached the inn, which was such as he had described; that is to say, one of the most wretched that I had as yet seen in Spain. A large room served as kitchen, dining-hall and sleeping apartment. On a flat stone in the centre was the fire, the smoke from which escaped through an aperture in the roof, or rather settled down in a cloud a few feet above the ground, while five or six old mule-blankets, spread on the ground against the wall, did duty as beds for travellers.

Twenty steps from the house, or rather the single apartment

just described, was a sort of shed, serving as a stable. In this charming retreat there were no human beings visible except an old woman and a young girl of ten or twelve, both of them the colour of soot, and clothed in horrible rags. "Behold all that remains," I said to myself, "of the population of the ancient Munda Bœtica! Oh, Cæsar! oh, Sextus Pompey! how amazed you would be, were you to return to this world!"

On perceiving my companion, the old woman allowed an exclamation of surprise to escape her: "Ah, Señor don José!" she cried.

Don José knit his brows, and raised his hand with a gesture of authority that at once silenced her. I turned towards my guide, and with an almost imperceptible sign made him understand that I was perfectly aware of the sort of man with whom I was to pass the night. The supper, which was served on a little table a foot high, was better than I expected, and consisted of an old cock fricasseed with rice and an abundance of pimentoes, then some pimentoes in oil, followed by some "gaspacho," a species of salad of pimentoes; which three highly seasoned dishes obliged us to have frequent recourse to a skin of Montilla wine, that proved to be delicious. Our repast over, I espied a mandolin hanging against the wall—mandolins are found everywhere throughout Spain—and asked the little girl if she knew how to play.

"No, Señor; but Don José plays it so well!"

"Be good enough to sing me something," I said to him; "I am passionately fond of your national music."

"I can refuse nothing to so civil a gentleman, who gives me such good cigars," exclaimed Don José with a good-humoured air, and the mandolin being handed to him, he sang to his own accompaniment. His voice was a little harsh, though nevertheless agreeable, the air strange and melancholy; as for the words, I did not understand a single one.

'If I am not mistaken, that is not a Spanish melody. It

resembles the 'zorzicos' that I have heard in the Provinces,[1] and the words must be in the Basque tongue."

"Yes," replied Don José with a gloomy air, as, placing the mandolin on the ground, he folded his arms, and with a singular expression of sadness fixed his eyes on the glimmer of the fading fire. Lit up by a lamp on the little table, his face, at once noble and fierce, reminded me of Milton's Satan; like him, perhaps, my companion was dreaming of the abode he had left, of the exile incurred by transgression. I essayed to revive the conversation, but he made no reply, absorbed as he was in his melancholy thoughts. The old woman had already sought her couch in a corner of the room, screened by a ragged blanket hung on a cord, and the little girl had followed her to this retreat reserved for the fair sex. My guide, now rising, requested me to follow him to the stable, but on the instant Don José, as if suddenly awakened from sleep, sharply inquired where he was going.

"To the stable," replied the guide.

"What for? The horses have food. Sleep here; the Señor will allow it."

"I fear that the Señor's horse is ill; I should like the Señor to see it; perhaps he will know what it is best to do."

It was evident that Antonio wished to speak to me in private, but I did not care to arouse Don José's suspicions; and situated as we were, it appeared to me that the wiser plan would be to manifest the most perfect confidence in him. I therefore told Antonio that I understood nothing about horses, and was anxious to go to sleep. Don José followed him to the stable, whence he soon returned alone, and told me that nothing ailed the horse; but my guide considered him so precious an animal that he was rubbing him down with his jacket in order to make.

[1] *The privileged provinces,* enjoying special *fueros* (civil rights), that is to say: Alava, Biscay, Guipuscoa, and a portion of Navarre. Basque is the language of the country.

him sweat, and contemplated passing the night in that gentle occupation.

Meanwhile, I had extended myself on the mule-blankets, to avoid contact with which I carefully wrapped myself in my cloak. After asking pardon for the liberty of placing himself near me, Don José lay down before the door, first renewing the priming of his weapon, which he was careful to place under the wallet which served him as a pillow. Five minutes after wishing each other good-night, we were both in a deep sleep. I thought myself sufficiently wearied to be able to rest even in such a den; but at the end of an hour, very disagreeable sensations aroused me from my first sleep, and as soon as I understood the nature of the attacks, I rose, persuaded that it would be better to pass the night in the open air, than under this inhospitable roof. Walking on tip-toe, I reached the door, stepped over the couch of Don José, who slept the sleep of the just, and managed so well as to leave the house without awakening him.

Near the door was a wooden bench, on which I stretched myself, and made as comfortable preparations as I could to pass the remainder of the night. I was about to close my eyes for the second time, when the shadow of a man and horse, both walking without the least noise, seemed to pass before me; I sat up, and thought that I recognised Antonio. Surprised to see him out of the stable at such an hour, I rose, and went to meet him. He had stopped, having at once perceived me, and asked in a low voice, "Where is he?"

"In the inn, and asleep: he has no fear of fleas. Why are you leading off this horse?"

I then noticed, that in order to make no noise in leaving the stable, Antonio had carefully wrapped the animal's hoofs in the remnants of an old blanket.

"In God's name, speak lower!" said Antonio. "You do not know who this man is. It is José Navarro, the most no-

torious bandit in Andalusia. All day I have been making signs to you that you would not understand."

"Bandit or not, what matters it to me?" I replied. "He has not robbed us, and has not, I wager, any desire to do so."

"Well and good; but two hundred ducats are promised to the person who shall deliver him up. There is a post of lancers a league and a half from here, and before day-break I will bring back some stout fellows. I would have taken his horse, but he is so vicious that no one except Navarro can approach him."

"The deuce take you!" said I. "What harm has this poor man done to you, that you should denounce him? Besides, are you quite sure that he is the brigand of whom you speak?"

"Perfectly sure. A little while ago he followed me to the stable, and said: 'You seem to know me; but if you tell this good gentleman who I am, I will blow your brains out.' Remain, Señor, remain by him; you have nothing to fear. So long as he knows you to be there, he will suspect nothing."

While talking, we had proceeded sufficiently far from the inn to prevent the iron shoes of the horse from being heard; and Antonio, having in a twinkling stripped the rags from the hoofs, prepared to mount the animal. I tried by prayers and threats to detain him.

"I am a poor devil, Señor," he said. "Two hundred ducats are not to be lost, especially when it is a question of ridding the country of such vermin. But take care: if Navarro be aroused suddenly, he will seize his blunderbuss, and then look out for yourself! As for me, I have gone too far to draw back, you must manage as best you can."

The rogue was already in the saddle; he put spurs to his horse, and in the darkness was soon lost to sight. I was exceedingly annoyed with my guide, and not a little uneasy. After a moment's reflection I decided to return to the inn, where Don José was still sleeping, making amends no doubt for the fatigue

and wakefulness of several adventurous days. I was forced to shake him roughly to rouse him, and shall never forget his fierce look and his startled movement to seize his blunderbuss, which I had taken the precaution to remove to some distance from him.

"Señor," said I, "I beg pardon for waking you; but I have a stupid question to ask. Would you be pleased to witness the arrival here of half a dozen lancers?"

He sprang to his feet, and with a terrible voice, cried out: "Who has told you?"

"It matters little whence the warning comes, provided it be well founded."

"Your guide has betrayed me, but he shall pay for it. Where is he?"

"I do not know—in the stable, I think—but some one has told me—"

"Who has told you? It cannot be the old woman—"

"Some one whom I do not know; but without more words, have you, yes or no, any reason for not awaiting the soldiers? If you have, do not lose a moment; if not, good-night, and I beg pardon for disturbing your slumbers."

"Ah, your guide! your guide! I mistrusted him from the first; but—his account shall be settled! Adieu, Señor; may God repay you this service. I am not altogether so bad a fellow as you may believe—yes, there is still something in me that deserves the sympathy of an honest man. Adieu, Señor—I have but one regret: not to be able to discharge this debt to you."

"As sole reward of the service that I have rendered you, promise me, Don José, not to suspect any one—not to think of vengeance. Look—here are some cigars for you to smoke on the road—a pleasant journey to you!"

I offered him my hand, which he grasped without reply. He took his weapon and wallet, and after saying a few words to the

old woman in a slang that I could not understand, he hurried to the shed, and a few moments later I heard him set off at full gallop.

I once more laid down on the bench, but could not again fall asleep. I asked myself if I had been right in saving a robber, perhaps a murderer, from the gallows, solely because I had partaken in his company of ham and of rice "à la Valencienne." Had I not betrayed my guide, who was upholding the law? Had I not exposed him to the vengeance of a scoundrel? But the duties of hospitality! Bah, the prejudice of the savage! I shall be answerable, thought I, for all the future crimes this bandit will commit. Nevertheless, is this instinct of conscience that resists all argument really a prejudice? Perhaps, in the delicate position into which I had fallen, I could not extricate myself without remorse; and I was still musing in the greatest uncertainty on the subject of the morality of my action, when I saw half a dozen lancers approaching accompanied by Antonio, who prudently kept in the rear. I advanced to meet them, with the information that the bandit had taken flight more than two hours previously. Questioned by the corporal, the old woman replied that she knew Navarro, but that, living alone, she would never have dared to risk her life in denouncing him. She added that it was always his habit, when he came to her house, to set off in the middle of the night. As for myself, I was obliged to go some leagues from there to show my passport, and to sign an affidavit before the alcalde, after which I was permitted to resume my archæological researches. Antonio bore me some ill-will, suspecting that it was I who had prevented his earning the two hundred ducats; nevertheless, we parted good friends at Cordova, where I gave him as large a gratuity as the state of my finances would allow.

CHAPTER II.

I REMAINED some days at Cordova. I had been informed of a certain manuscript in the library of the Dominicans in which I should find some interesting information regarding the ancient Munda, and being well received by the good Fathers, I used to pass most of my days in their convent, and in the evenings walked about the city. At Cordova, towards sunset, a number of idlers gather on the quay that extends along the right bank of the Guadalquivir, where one breathes the emanations of a tannery that still maintains the ancient renown of the country for the preparation of leather, but on the other hand one enjoys a spectacle of piquant interest. A few minutes before the *Angelus* is rung, a large number of women assemble on the river bank below the quay, which is rather high; not a man would dare to go amongst them. As soon as the *Angelus* rings, it is understood to be night, and at the last stroke of the bell all the women undress themselves, and enter the water; then there are screams, laughter, and an infernal uproar. From the top of the quay the men watch the bathers, with wide open eyes, but they cannot see much. Yet these white, uncertain forms, outlined in the dark blue waters, excite poetic minds, and with a little imagination it is not difficult to picture to one's self, Diana and her nymphs in the bath, without any fear of meeting Acteon's fate. I have heard that on a certain day some scapegraces combined to bribe the bellringer of the cathedral to ring the *Angelus* twenty minutes before the legal hour, and, although it was still broad day, the nymphs of the Guadalquivir did not hesitate, but, placing greater trust in the *Angelus* than in the sun, and with their consciences at rest prepared themselves for

the bath. I was not there then; in my time the bellringer was incorruptible, the twilight very dim, and only a cat could have distinguished the most aged orange-seller from the prettiest grisette of Cordova.

One evening, when it was quite dark, I was smoking, leaning on the parapet of the quay, when a woman ascended the stairway that led to the river, and seated herself near me. In her hair was a large bunch of jasmine, whose petals exhale an intoxicating fragrance at night. She was simply, perhaps poorly dressed all in black, like the greater part of the grisettes in the evening. The respectable women wear black in the morning only, whilst in the evening they dress in the French style. As she approached me, the bather allowed the mantilla that covered her head to slip down on her shoulders, and in the dim light of the stars I saw that she was small, young, well proportioned, and had very large eyes. I at once threw away my cigar, and comprehending this act of politeness, altogether French, she hastened to say that she liked the odour of tobacco, and that she even smoked herself when she met with very mild cigarettes. Fortunately, I had some in my case, which I at once offered her, and she deigned to take one, lighting it with a piece of burning cord which a child brought us for a cuarto. Mingling our smoke, we chatted so long, the fair bather and I, that we at length found ourselves almost alone on the quay. I thought it would not be indiscreet to offer her an ice at a "neveria,"[1] which, after a modest hesitation, she accepted; but, before deciding, she wished to know the time. I made my repeater strike, at which she seemed greatly astonished.

"What inventions you have, you foreign gentlemen! Of what country are you, Señor? An Englishman, no doubt?"[2]

[1] A café provided with an ice-house, or rather a store-house of snow. In Spain there is scarcely a village without its *neveria*.

[2] In Spain every traveller who does not carry about samples of silks and calicoes passes for an Englishman—*Inglesito*. It is the same in the East.

"French, and your devoted servant. And you, Señorita, or should I say Señora; you are probably a native of Cordova?"

"No."

"At least, you are Andalusian. I recognize it by your soft manner of speech."

"If you are so close an observer of a person's accent, you must readily guess from whence I come."

"I believe that you are from the country of Jesus; two steps from paradise,"—I had learned this metaphor, which implies Andalusia, from my friend, Francisco Sevilla, a well-known picador.

"Bah! paradise; the people about here say that it is not made for us."

"Then you may, perhaps, be Moorish, or—" I stopped, not liking to say Jewess.

"Come, come! You see very well that I am a gipsy. Do you wish me to tell you your fortune? Have you ever heard of the Carmencita? You see her now."

I was at that period, fifteen years ago, such an infidel as not to recoil with horror at finding myself at the side of a sorceress. "Good!" thought I; "last week I supped with a highway robber, and now I may as well eat ices with a servant of the devil." One should see everything whilst travelling; but I had yet another motive for cultivating her acquaintance. On leaving college, I confess it to my shame, I lost some time in studying the occult sciences, and on several occasions had even attempted to conjure up the spirit of darkness. Long since cured of my passion for such researches, all superstitions still possessed for me a certain charm of curiosity, and I promised myself no little gratification in learning the degree to which the art of magic had attained among the gipsies.

While talking, we had entered the "neveria," and seated ourselves at a little table, lighted by a candle enclosed in a glass globe. I then had plenty of leisure to examine my gipsy, while

some worthy people taking ices seemed amazed to see me in such good company. I doubt much that Carmen was of pure race; at any rate she was infinitely prettier than all the women of her nation whom I have ever met. A woman to be beautiful must, say the Spaniards, be definable by ten adjectives, each applicable to three parts of her person. For example, she should have three that are black—eyes, lashes, and brows; three that are fine—fingers, lips, hair, etc. My gipsy could not claim so many perfections. Her skin, although perfectly smooth, was almost the colour of copper. Her eyes were oblique but admirably shaped; her lips rather full, but well-formed and displaying teeth whiter than skinned almonds. Her hair, perhaps a little coarse, was black, long and glossy, with blue tints like the wing of a raven. Not to weary you by too prolix a description, I will sum up by saying that with each defect she combined some charm that shone forth perhaps more strongly for the contrast. It was a strange, wild beauty, a face that at first bewildered, but could never be forgotten. Her eyes especially had an expression at once voluptuous and fierce, that I have never since found in any human look. "Eye of gipsy, eye of wolf," is a Spanish saying that shows keen observation. If you have not the time to visit the Jardin des Plantes to study the look of a wolf, note your cat when it is watching a sparrow.

It would naturally have been absurd to have my fortune told in a café, therefore I begged the pretty sorceress to permit me to accompany her to her dwelling, to which she consented without difficulty, but she wished to know the flight of time, and again asked me to make my repeater strike. "Is it really gold?" she asked, examining it with much attention.

When we again set forth it was dark night, the greater part of the shops were closed and the streets nearly deserted. We crossed the bridge over the Guadalquivir, and at the extremity of the suburbs arrived in front of a house that had in no degree the appearance of a palace. The door was opened by a

child, to whom the gipsy said a few words in a tongue unfamiliar to me, but which I afterwards learnt to be "rommani," or " chipe calli," the idiom of the gipsies. The child immediately disappeared, leaving us in a largish room furnished with a little table, two stools and a chest. I should not forget to mention also a jar of water, a pile of oranges, and a bunch of onions.

As soon as we were alone, the gipsy took from the chest some cards that appeared to be well worn, a magnet, a dried chameleon, and some other things essential to her art. Then she told me to cross my left hand with a piece of money, and the magic ceremonies began. It is useless to relate her predictions, and, as to her manner of performing, it was evident that she was a thorough sorceress.

Unfortunately we were soon interrupted. The door was suddenly opened with great violence, and a man, muffled to the eyes in a brown cloak, entered the room, apostrophizing the gipsy in a manner far from gracious. I could not understand what he said, but his tone of voice indicated that he was in an excessively bad temper. At the sight of him the gipsy showed neither surprise nor anger, but ran to meet him, and with extraordinary volubility addressed him in the mysterious language that she had used with the child. The word "payllo," often repeated, was the sole one that I understood, and I knew that gipsies thus designate all men of a race foreign to their own. Supposing myself to be the subject of discussion, I was in expectation of a delicate explanation, and with my hand already on the leg of one of the stools, I endeavoured to calculate the precise moment in which it would be expedient to throw it at the head of the intruder. The latter roughly thrust back the gipsy and advanced towards me; then, drawing back a step, exclaimed : " Ah, Señor ! it is you !"

I looked at him more closely and recognized my friend Don José. At that moment I rather regretted not having allowed him to be hanged.

"Eh! is it you, my friend!" said I, laughing, with the best grace that I could assume. "You have interrupted the Señorita at the moment in which she was foretelling very interesting events."

"Always the same! This must end," he muttered between his teeth, fixing a fierce look on her.

Meanwhile the gipsy continued to talk to him in her native tongue. By degrees she grew excited, her eyes were suffused with blood and became terrible, her features contracted, she stamped her feet. She seemed to be passionately urging him to some action to which he appeared averse. I fancied that I understood only too well what it was in seeing her little hand pass and repass rapidly under her chin. I was tempted to believe that the subject under discussion was the cutting of a throat, and I had some suspicion that the throat in question was my own.

To all this torrent of eloquence Don José replied only by two or three words uttered in a curt tone, at which the gipsy darted at him a look of profound contempt; then seating herself in the Turkish fashion in a corner of the room, she selected an orange, which she peeled and began to eat.

Don José took my arm, opened the door, and led me into the street. We walked about two hundred steps in perfect silence; then, extending his hand, he said: "Keep straight on and you will come to the bridge."

Immediately turning his back he rapidly moved off. I returned to my inn feeling rather sheepish and in a bad humour. The worst of it was, I discovered when undressing myself that my watch was missing.

Various considerations hindered me from going to reclaim it the next day, or from appealing to the corregidor to have search made for it. I finished my work on the manuscript in the Dominican library, and took my departure for Seville. After several months of rambling through Andalusia I wished to

return to Madrid, and it was necessary to pass through Cordova. I had no intention of making a long sojourn, for I had conceived an aversion for this beautiful city, and the bathers of the Guadalquivir: nevertheless some friends to see again, some commissions to execute, would detain me three or four days in the ancient capital of the Mussulman princes.

On my reappearance at the Dominican convent, one of the fathers, who had always evinced a lively interest in my researches as to the site of Munda, received me with open arms, exclaiming: "God's name be praised! Welcome, my dear friend; we all believed you to be dead, and I have said many a prayer, that I do not regret, for the salvation of your soul. So you are not assassinated? Robbed, we know you have been."

"How so?" I asked him, a little surprised.

"Yes, that beautiful repeating watch that you would cause to strike, you know, whenever we told you that it was time to go to the chapel choir. Well! it has been found, and will be returned to you."

"That is to say," I interrupted, a little out of countenance, "that I had mislaid it."

"The rogue is under lock and key, and as we knew him to be a man who would fire at a Christian for the sake of a peseta, we were dying of fear lest he had killed you. I will go with you to the corregidor, and we will have your beautiful watch restored. And then say if you dare, when you return home, that justice does not know her trade in Spain!"

"I confess," I said, "that I would rather lose my watch than testify in court and cause a poor devil to be hanged, especially because—because—"

"Oh! have no uneasiness; he is fully committed, and cannot be hanged twice. When I say hanged, I am mistaken. He is a hidalgo, is your robber; therefore he will be garroted the day after to-morrow, without fail.[1] You see that a robbery

[1] In 1830 the nobility still enjoyed, exclusively, this privilege. Now

thing else. One day, when I had been winning, a lad from Alava picked a quarrel with me: we seized our 'maquilas,'[1] and again I was the conqueror; but my advantage obliged me to fly the country. I met a troop of dragoons, and soon enlisted in the regiment of Almanza. We mountaineers easily learn the military profession. I quickly became a corporal, and was promised promotion to the rank of quartermaster, when, to my misfortune, I was placed on guard at the tobacco manufactory at Seville. If you have ever visited that city, you must have noticed that enormous building beyond the ramparts, near the Guadalquivir. I still seem to see the entrance gate and the guard-house hard by. While on duty, Spaniards usually sleep or play at cards; but I, as a true Navarrese, tried always to be occupied. I was making a chain with some brass wire to fasten my gun-primer, when suddenly a comrade said: 'There is the bell ringing; the girls are about to return to work.'

"I should tell you, Señor, that there are four or five hundred women employed in this manufactory. It is they who roll the cigars in a great hall into which men are not allowed to enter, except by special permission of the superintendent magistrate of the police and municipal administration, because the women, especially the young ones, put themselves at their ease when the weather is warm. At the time when the women return from their dinner hour, many young men assemble to see them go by, and make them gallant speeches. There are few of these young persons who would refuse a silk mantilla, and amateurs of this style of angling have only to stoop to net the fish. While the others were looking on, I remained on my bench near the door. I was young then, was always thinking of home, and did not believe there could be any pretty girls without blue petticoats and plaits of hair falling over the shoulders.[2] Besides,

[1] The iron-pointed staff carried by the Basques.

[2] The usual toilette of the peasant women of Navarre and the Basque provinces.

I was rather afraid of the Andalusian women. I was not yet accustomed to their ways, for they are always poking fun, never uttering a sensible word. I was as usual busy on my chain, when I heard some of the young men of the city say: 'There is the little gipsy!' I raised my eyes and saw her. It was on a Friday, and I shall never forget it. I saw that Carmen, whom you know, at whose house I met you some months back.

"She had on a very short scarlet skirt, that displayed some white silk stockings with more than one hole, and little red morocco shoes, fastened with flame-coloured ribbons. She had thrown aside her mantilla, in order to show her shoulders and a large bunch of cassia that was fastened to her chemise. She had also a cassia bud hanging from her mouth, and she came forward, poising herself on her hips, like a filly from the Cordovan stud-farm. In my country, a woman in this costume would cause all who saw her to cross themselves. At Seville, every one paid her some well-turned compliment on her appearance, she replied to them all, casting sidelong glances the while, her hand on her hip, brazen-faced as the true gipsy that she was. At first sight she did not please me, and I resumed my work; but she, according to the custom of women and cats who do not come when they are called and come when they are not wanted, stopped in front of me, and said in the Andalusian fashion: 'My lad, will you give me that chain to carry the keys of my strong box?'

"'It is for my gun-primer,' I replied.

"'Your gun-primer!' she exclaimed, with a laugh. 'Your pin-case, you mean. Ah! the gentleman makes lace since he has need of pins!' Every one present began to laugh, and I felt myself grow scarlet, but could find no words with which to answer her. 'Come, my heart,' she resumed, 'make me seven ells of black lace for a mantilla, pin-dealer of my soul!' and taking the cassia bud from her mouth, with a twirl of her thumb

she threw it just between my eyes. Señor, it seemed like a ball striking me. I did not know what to do, and remained motionless as a log. When she had entered the factory, I saw the cassia bud lying between my feet, and I do not know what possessed me, but I picked it up without being perceived by my comrades, and carefully placed it in my jacket. Folly the first!

"Two or three hours afterwards I was still thinking of her, when a door-keeper arrived breathless and with terrified countenance, who told us that a woman had been assassinated in the large cigar hall of the factory, and that the guard must at once be sent there. The quartermaster ordered me to take two men, and learn the truth of the matter. Picture to yourself, Señor, that, on entering the hall, I found three hundred women in their shifts, or very nearly so, all screaming, yelling, gesticulating, and making an uproar that would not permit God's thunder to be heard. At one side of the hall, stretched on her back, and covered with blood, lay one of the women with a cross marked on her face by two stabs of a knife. In front of the wounded girl, who was being attended to by some of the best of the band, I saw Carmen held by five or six of her companions. Her victim kept crying out: 'A confessor! a confessor! I am dying!' Carmen uttered not a word; she clenched her teeth, and rolled her eyes like a chameleon.

"'What is the matter?' I asked, and had great trouble in ascertaining what had passed, for all the workwomen kept talking to me at once. It appeared that the wounded woman had boasted of having enough money to buy a donkey at the Triana market. 'Indeed!' said Carmen, who could not keep her tongue quiet; 'a broomstick is not enough for you, then.'

"The girl, wounded by the reproach, perhaps because she felt herself to be open to suspicion on that score, answered that, 'not having the honour to be either a gipsy, or god-daughter to Satan, she was not learned in broomsticks, but that Señorita Carmencita would soon make the acquaintance of her donkey

when the corregidor took her for a ride, with two lackeys behind to drive away the flies.'

"'Very well,' rejoined Carmen, 'and I will make drinking troughs for the flies on your cheek, and I will also paint a chess-board on it.' Thereupon, one! two! with the knife with which she had been cutting the ends of the cigars, she carved the cross of St. Andrew on the girl's face.

"The case was clear, and I took Carmen by the arm. 'My sister,' I said politely, 'you must follow me.'

"She darted a look as if she recognised me, then said, with a resigned air: 'Let us be off. Where is my mantilla?' She placed it over her head so as to show only one of her large eyes, and followed my two men as gentle as a lamb. On arriving at the guard-house, the quartermaster said that it was a serious matter and that she must be taken to prison, and it was again I who was to conduct her there. I placed her between two dragoons, and walked behind as a corporal should do on such an occasion. We set off for the city, and at first the gipsy remained silent, but in the Calle de las Sierpes, with which you are familiar, and which well merits its name from its windings, she began by allowing her mantilla to fall on her shoulders, that I might see her pretty, beguiling face, and, turning towards me as well as she was able, asked: 'My officer, whither are you taking me?'

"'To prison, my poor child,' I replied, as gently as I could, as a true soldier should speak to a prisoner, especially to a woman.

"'Alas! what will become of me? Señor officer, have pity on me. You are so young, so handsome.' Then in a lower tone, she continued: 'Let me escape, and I will give you a piece of the "bar lachi" that will make you beloved of all women.'

"This 'bar lachi' Señor, is the loadstone with which gipsies claim that witchcraft is practised by those skilled in its use. Give a woman a pinch of it scraped to powder in a glass of white wine, and she will no longer resist you. To this offer of Carmen's I replied as seriously as I could: 'We are not here

for such idle tales; you must go to prison; such are my orders, and there is no alternative.'

"We men of the Basque provinces have an accent that enables the Spaniards to recognize us easily, but, on the other hand, not one of them can learn to say even, 'Yes, sir,' in Basque. Carmen, therefore, had no difficulty in discerning that I came from the provinces. You must know, Señor, that the gipsies being, as it were, of no country, and always travelling, speak every language, and the greater part of them are at home in Portugal, France, the Basque provinces, Catalonia—everywhere; even among the Moors and the English they make themselves understood. Carmen knew Basque pretty well. 'Comrade of my heart, are you of my country?' she suddenly asked me.

"Our language is so beautiful, Señor, that to hear it in a foreign land fills us with emotion.

"I should like to have a confessor from the provinces," added the bandit sadly, in a low tone. After a moment's silence, he resumed: "'I am from Elizondo,' I answered her in Basque, much moved at hearing her speak my native tongue.

"'And I am from Etchalar,' she said, which is a territory four hours distant from my native place. 'I was carried off by some gipsies to Seville, where I have been working in the factory, to gain sufficient money wherewith to return to Navarre to my poor mother, who has only myself and a little garden with twenty cider-apple trees to support her. Ah! if I were but at home in front of the white mountain! I have been insulted because I do not belong to this land of pickpockets and dealers in rotten oranges; and these hussies have banded together against me, because I said that all their Seville braggarts, with their knives, could not frighten a lad of our country with his blue cap and his "maquila." Comrade, my friend, will you do nothing to aid your countrywoman?'

"She lied, Señor; she has always lied. I do not know if during her whole life that girl ever uttered a word of truth;

but when she spoke I believed her; it was too much for me. She spoke Basque but indifferently, yet I believed her to be a Navarrese; her eyes alone, and her mouth, and her complexion, proclaimed her a gipsy; but I was mad, and no longer capable of reasoning. I thought that if any Spaniards had ventured to speak ill of my country, I also would have slashed their faces, as she had just done to her companion. In short, I was like a drunken man; I began to talk nonsense, and was on the point of doing something foolish.

"'If I were to push you, and you should fall, compatriot,' she resumed in Basque, 'it would not be these two Spanish recruits who could hold me.' Faith, I forgot orders and everything, and said to her: 'Well, my friend, my countrywoman, try, and may Our Lady of the Mountain help you!'

"At that moment we were passing one of those narrow lanes of which there are so many in Seville, when suddenly Carmen turned, and gave me a blow with her fist full in the chest. I purposely fell down on my back, and with a bound she sprang over me and began to run, showing us a pair of legs as fleet as they were shapely. I got up again immediately, but placed my lance adroitly across the street, so that my comrades were, for the moment, stopped in their pursuit. Then I began to run, and they after me; but as to catching her there was no danger of doing so, with our spurs, our sabres, and our lances! In less time than I take to tell it you, the prisoner had disappeared. Besides, all the idlers of the quarter favoured her flight, and laughed at us while sending us off on the wrong track.

"After various marches and counter-marches, we were obliged to return to the guard-house without a receipt from the governor of the prison. My men, to escape punishment, made known that Carmen had talked Basque with me, and it appeared by no means natural, to tell the truth, that a blow from the fist of so small a girl should so easily have overthrown a young

[1] All the Spanish cavalry carried lances at this period.

fellow of my strength. It was all too equivocal, or rather too clear. On coming off duty I was degraded from my rank, and sent to prison for a month. It was my first punishment since entering the service. Adieu to the quartermaster's stripes, of which I had thought myself already the happy possessor!

"The first days in prison passed very sadly. In turning soldier I fancied that I should at least become an officer. Longa, Mina, my compatriots, are captains-general; Chapalangarra, who is a 'negro,'[1] like Mina, and also like him a refugee in your country, was a colonel, and I have played tennis twenty times with his brother, who was a poor fellow like myself. And now, all the time that I had served, without even a reprimand, was merely time lost. Here was I, fallen into discredit, and to reinstate myself in the opinion of my superiors I should be obliged to work ten times harder than when I arrived as a recruit! And why had I incurred this punishment? For a jade of a gipsy who was making sport of me, and who, without doubt, was at that moment thieving in some corner of the city. Nevertheless, I could not prevent myself from thinking of her. Would you believe it, Señor? her silk stockings full of holes, that she so fully revealed in her flight, were always before my eyes. I looked into the street through the prison bars, and among all the women who passed by, I did not see one who was to be compared with this devil of a girl. And then, in spite of myself, I smelt the cassia flower that she had thrown to me, and which, dry and faded, still retained its fragrance. If there really are sorceresses, that girl was one!

"One day the jailer entered and gave me a loaf of bread from Alcalà.[2] 'Here,' he said, 'see what your cousin sends you.'

[1] This does not mean a negro, but is some political allusion of the time.

[2] Alcalà de los Panaderos, a market town two leagues distant from Seville, where they make delicious rolls. They are said to owe their excellence to the water of Alcalà, and are brought every day in great [illegible]s to Seville.

I took the bread, greatly astonished, as I had no cousin at Seville. 'Perhaps it is a mistake,' I thought; but the loaf was so appetising, it smelt so good, that without troubling myself to know whence it came, or for whom intended, I resolved to eat it. In cutting it, my knife encountered something hard. I examined it, and found a small English file that had been slipped into the dough before it was baked. In the loaf there was also a gold piece worth two piastres. No more doubt, then; it was a gift from Carmen. To people of her race, liberty is the all in all, and they would set fire to a city to save themselves from one day in prison. She was a shrewd girl, and with this loaf one could scoff at the jailers. In an hour the thickest bar would yield to the little file, and with the two piastres, at the shop of the first old clothes dealer, I could exchange my uniform for the coat of a civilian. You may well believe that a man who had often taken the eaglets from their nests among our rocks, would find little difficulty in gaining the street from a window less than thirty feet high; but I did not wish to escape. My soldier's honour still remained, and to desert seemed to me a great crime; yet I was touched by this mark of remembrance, for when in prison it gladdens us to think that beyond the walls there is a friend interested in our welfare. The gold piece, however, somewhat mortified me; I should have liked to return it, but where to find my creditor? That did not seem to me very easy.

"After the ceremony of being degraded from my rank I believed that I should have nothing more to suffer, but yet another humiliation awaited me; this was when, on leaving prison, and being ordered on duty, I was posted as a sentinel like a common soldier. You cannot imagine what a man of spirit and sensibility experiences on such an occasion. I think that I would as soon have been shot; then, at least, a man walks alone, in front of his platoon; he feels himself to be of importance, and all eyes are upon him.

thing else. One day, when I had been winning, a lad from Alava picked a quarrel with me: we seized our 'maquilas,'[1] and again I was the conqueror; but my advantage obliged me to fly the country. I met a troop of dragoons, and soon enlisted in the regiment of Almanza. We mountaineers easily learn the military profession. I quickly became a corporal, and was promised promotion to the rank of quartermaster, when, to my misfortune, I was placed on guard at the tobacco manufactory at Seville. If you have ever visited that city, you must have noticed that enormous building beyond the ramparts, near the Guadalquivir. I still seem to see the entrance gate and the guard-house hard by. While on duty, Spaniards usually sleep or play at cards; but I, as a true Navarrese, tried always to be occupied. I was making a chain with some brass wire to fasten my gun-primer, when suddenly a comrade said: 'There is the bell ringing; the girls are about to return to work.'

"I should tell you, Señor, that there are four or five hundred women employed in this manufactory. It is they who roll the cigars in a great hall into which men are not allowed to enter, except by special permission of the superintendent magistrate of the police and municipal administration, because the women, especially the young ones, put themselves at their ease when the weather is warm. At the time when the women return from their dinner hour, many young men assemble to see them go by, and make them gallant speeches. There are few of these young persons who would refuse a silk mantilla, and amateurs of this style of angling have only to stoop to net the fish. While the others were looking on, I remained on my bench near the door. I was young then, was always thinking of home, and did not believe there could be any pretty girls without blue petticoats and plaits of hair falling over the shoulders.[2] Besides,

[1] The iron-pointed staff carried by the Basques.

[2] The usual toilette of the peasant women of Navarre and the Basque provinces.

I was rather afraid of the Andalusian women. I was not yet accustomed to their ways, for they are always poking fun, never uttering a sensible word. I was as usual busy on my chain, when I heard some of the young men of the city say: 'There is the little gipsy!' I raised my eyes and saw her. It was on a Friday, and I shall never forget it. I saw that Carmen, whom you know, at whose house I met you some months back.

"She had on a very short scarlet skirt, that displayed some white silk stockings with more than one hole, and little red morocco shoes, fastened with flame-coloured ribbons. She had thrown aside her mantilla, in order to show her shoulders and a large bunch of cassia that was fastened to her chemise. She had also a cassia bud hanging from her mouth, and she came forward, poising herself on her hips, like a filly from the Cordovan stud-farm. In my country, a woman in this costume would cause all who saw her to cross themselves. At Seville, every one paid her some well-turned compliment on her appearance, she replied to them all, casting sidelong glances the while, her hand on her hip, brazen-faced as the true gipsy that she was. At first sight she did not please me, and I resumed my work; but she, according to the custom of women and cats who do not come when they are called and come when they are not wanted, stopped in front of me, and said in the Andalusian fashion: 'My lad, will you give me that chain to carry the keys of my strong box?'

"'It is for my gun-primer,' I replied.

"'Your gun-primer!' she exclaimed, with a laugh. 'Your pin-case, you mean. Ah! the gentleman makes lace since he has need of pins!' Every one present began to laugh, and I felt myself grow scarlet, but could find no words with which to answer her. 'Come, my heart,' she resumed, 'make me seven ells of black lace for a mantilla, pin-dealer of my soul!' and taking the cassia bud from her mouth, with a twirl of her thumb

"We had taken the road leading back to Seville. At the entrance of the Calle de las Sierpes she bought a dozen oranges that she made me tie up in my handkerchief. A little further on she purchased a loaf of bread, some sausage, and a bottle of Manzanilla; finally she entered a confectioner's, where she threw on the counter the gold piece I had returned to her, another that she had in her pocket, and also some silver money; then she asked me for all that I had, which amounted only to a peseta and some cuartos, and I was ashamed to have nothing more to offer. I thought that she would empty the shop. She selected all that was most tempting and most expensive—'yemas' (sugared yolk of egg), 'turon' (hardbake), crystallised fruits —so long as her money lasted; all these purchases, moreover, I was obliged to carry in paper bags. You, perhaps, know the Calle del Candilejo, where there is a bust of the King Don Pedro, the Justiciary.[1] It ought to have inspired me with

[1] The King Don Pedro, whom we surname the Cruel, and whom Queen Isabella, the Catholic, always called the Justiciary, was in the habit of perambulating the streets at night, seeking adventures like the Caliph Haroun al Raschid. One night, in an obscure street, he fell into a quarrel with a man who was giving a serenade. They fought, and the king killed the serenading lover. At the noise of the clashing swords, an old woman put her head out of a window and lighted up the scene by a little lamp (*candilejo*) that she held in her hand. The king, otherwise active and vigorous, had the singular defect, that when he walked his knee-joints cracked audibly, and by this curious noise the old woman recognised him. The next day the chief of the municipal authorities came to make his report to the king. "Sire, last night, in such a street, a duel was fought: one of the combatants is dead." "Have you discovered the murderer?" "Yes, sire." "Why is he not already punished?" "Sire, I await your orders." "Let the law be executed." Now the king had just issued a decree, declaring that every duellist should be decapitated, and that his head should remain exposed to view at the place where he fought. The magistrate extricated himself from the dilemma like a man of wit. He ordered the head of a statue of the king to be sawed off and exhibited in a niche in the middle of the street—the scene of the murder. The king and all the Sevillians were highly

certain reflections. We stopped in front of an old house in that street; she entered the alley, and knocked at a door on the ground floor, which was opened by a gipsy, a true servant of Satan. Carmen said a few words to her in her own tongue, at which the woman grumbled. To appease her, Carmen gave her two oranges and a handful of sweetmeats, and permitted her to have a taste of the wine. Then she placed her mantle on her shoulders and led her to the door, which she fastened with a heavy wooden bar. As soon as we were alone, she began to laugh and dance like a mad woman, singing the while: 'You are my husband, I am your wife.' I stood in the middle of the room, laden with her purchases, not knowing where to deposit them. She threw them on the floor, and fell on my neck, saying: 'I pay my debts, I pay my debts! It is the law of the Cales!' [1]

"Ah, Señor," continued Don José; "that day! When I think of it I forget what to-morrow will bring."

The bandit was silent a moment; then, having relighted his cigar he continued: "We passed the whole day together, eating, drinking, in delicious folly. When she had eaten sweetmeats like a child of six years, she crammed handfuls of them into the old woman's water jar. 'It is to make sherbet for her,' she said. She crushed the 'yemas' by throwing them against the wall. 'That will keep the flies from disturbing us,' she cried. There was no trick, no witching absurdity that she did

satisfied. The street received its name from the lamp of the old woman, the only witness of the adventure; that is the popular tradition. Zuñiga relates the story somewhat differently. (See "Annals of Sevilla," v. II., p. 136.) However it may be, there still exists a Calle del Candilejo, and in it there is a stone bust that is said to be the portrait of Don Pedro. Unfortunately this bust is modern. The old one was much battered in the seventeenth century, and the municipality of that period had it replaced by the one now seen.

[1] *Calo*: feminine, *cali*: plural *cales*. Literally, *black*—the name the gipsies give themselves in their own tongue.

not commit. I expressed a desire to see her dance, but where to find castanets? She immediately seizes the old woman's sole plate, breaks it into bits, and behold her dancing the 'romalis,' clicking the pieces of crockery as skilfully as if they were castanets of ebony or ivory. One never grew weary by the side of that girl, Señor, I can tell you. Evening came, and I heard the drums beat tattoo. 'I must go to quarters for the roll call,' I said.

"'To quarters?' she repeated, with a contemptuous air. 'You are then a negro, to allow yourself to be driven by the stick? You are a regular canary[1] both in dress and in spirit. Off with you! You are tame and chicken-hearted.'

"I remained, resigned in advance to a day in the cells. In the morning she was the first to speak of our separation. 'Listen, Joséito,' said she. 'Have I repaid you? According to our law I owed you nothing since you are a "payllo;" but you are a pretty fellow and have pleased me. We are quits. Good-day.'

"I asked when I should see her again.

"'When you are less of a simpleton,' she replied, laughingly. Then added in a more serious tone: 'Do you know, my son, that I really believe I love you a little? But that cannot last. Dog and wolf never dwell happily together long. Perhaps if you were to follow the law of Egypt I might care to become your wife. But all that is nonsense: it cannot be. Bah, my lad! believe me, you have cleared your score at a cheap rate. You have met the devil, yes, the devil; he is not always black, and he has not wrung your neck. I am dressed in wool,[2] but I am no sheep. Go burn a taper before your "majari;"[3] she has well won it. Come! once more good-bye. Think no more of Carmencita, or she will make you marry a widow with wooden legs.'[4]

[1] The Spanish dragoons are dressed in yellow.

[2] *Me dicas vriardâ de jorpoy, bus ne sino braco.*—Gipsy proverb.

[3] The blessed Virgin.

[4] The gallows, the widow of the last person hanged.

"Thus speaking, she removed the bar that fastened the door, and when fairly in the street, wrapped herself in her mantilla and turned on her heel.

"She spoke the truth. It would have been wise to think of her no more; but after that day passed in the Calle del Candilejo, she never left my thoughts. I walked through the streets every day hoping to meet her; I asked news of her from the old woman and the fried-fish dealer, but both of them said that she had gone to Laloro,[1] which is their name for Portugal. Their replies were probably in accordance with Carmen's instructions, but only a short time passed before I found out that they were lying. A few weeks after the day spent with Carmen, I was placed on sentinel duty at one of the city gates. At a short distance from the gate was a breach in the wall that some workmen were employed in repairing during the day, and which was guarded by a sentry at night, posted to intercept smugglers. Several times in the morning I saw Lillas Pastia pass and repass the guard-house, stopping to talk with some of my comrades, who all knew him well, and his fish and fritters better still. He approached me, and asked if I had any tidings of Carmen.

"'No, I have not.'

"'Well, you soon will have.

"He was not mistaken. At night I was pacing my sentinel-beat at the breach, and as soon as the corporal had withdrawn I saw a woman coming towards me. My heart told me that it was Carmen, nevertheless I cried out: 'Keep off! no one can pass!'

"'Now use no naughty threats,' she said, making herself known to me.

"'What! you here, Carmen?'

"'Yes, my countryman. Let us have a few words, but to the purpose. Do you care to earn a douro? Some people will presently come by with a few bales; take no notice of them.'

[1] The red land.

"'No, I must prevent them from passing: such are my orders.'

"'Your orders! your orders! You did not think of your orders in the Calle del Candilejo.'

"'Ah!' I replied, quite distracted by the mere remembrance, 'that was well worth all forgetfulness of orders; but I will not take the smugglers' money.'

"'Come, then! If you will not take the money, would you like to dine with me again at old Dorothea's house?'

"'No,' I said, half choked by the words I uttered, 'I cannot.'

"'Very well. If you are so fastidious, I know to whom to apply. I shall invite your officer to go with me to Dorothea's. He appears to be a good fellow, and will put a more obliging sentry in your place, who will only see what is necessary to be seen. Adieu, canary! I shall laugh heartily the day on which the orders are to hang you.'

"I had the weakness to call her back, and consented to permit the whole nation of gipsies to pass, if necessary, provided that I obtained the only reward I desired. She immediately swore to fulfil her promise the next day, and ran to apprise her friends, who were only a few paces distant. There were five of them, one of whom was Pastia, all heavily laden with English goods. Carmen kept watch, and was to give warning with her castanets as soon as she should perceive the patrol; but for this she had no need; the smugglers completed the business in a moment.

"The next day I went to the Calle del Candilejo, where Carmen kept me waiting, and at length arrived in very ill humour. 'I do not care for people who need to be entreated,' she said. 'You rendered me a much greater service the first time, without knowing if anything was to be gained by it; yesterday you bargained with me. I do not know why I have come, for I no longer like you. Here, be off with you, there is a douro for your trouble.'

"I was very near throwing the money at her head, and was

obliged to exercise great self-control not to strike her. After quarrelling violently for a whole hour, I left her, and in a rage wandered for some time through the city, walking here and there like a madman, and at length, entering a church and placing myself in the darkest corner, wept bitter tears. Suddenly I heard a voice say: 'Tears from a dragoon! I will make a philter of them.' I raised my eyes; Carmen stood before me.

"'Well, my countryman, are you still angry with me?' she asked. 'It must be that I like you in spite of myself, for since you left I do not know what ails me. Come! Now it is I who asks you if you will come to the Calle del Candilejo.'

"We made peace, but Carmen's temper was like the weather in my own country. Among our mountains never is a storm so near as when the sun is most brilliant. She had promised to meet me another time at Dorothea's and did not come. Dorothea told me over and over again that she had gone to Portugal on business for her people. Knowing by experience how far to rely upon this, I sought Carmen wherever I thought it possible for her to be, and passed through the Calle del Candilejo twenty times a day. One evening I was waiting with Dorothea, whom I had nearly made sociable by dint of standing her a glass of aniseed from time to time, when Carmen entered, followed by a young man, a lieutenant in our regiment. 'Run off quickly,' she said to me in Basque.

"I remained stupefied, rage in my heart.

"'What are you doing here?' asked the lieutenant. 'Decamp, away with you!'

"I could not move a step; I was as though paralysed. The officer, very angry, seeing that I did not withdraw, and that I had not even removed my foraging cap, took hold of me by the collar and shook me roughly. I do not know what I said to him, but he drew his sword and I unsheathed my own. The old woman seized my arm, and the lieutenant gave me a cut across the

forehead, the mark of which I still bear. I sprang back, and with one blow of my elbow knocked over Dorothea, then, as the lieutenant followed me up, I held the point of my sword towards him, and he ran himself through. Carmen then extinguished the lamp, and in her own language told Dorothea to fly. I rushed out into the street, and began to run I knew not whither. It seemed to me that some one was following me, and when I recovered my senses I found that Carmen was by my side.

"'Great idiot of a canary!' she said, 'you are only capable of making a fool of yourself. Did I not tell you that I should bring you misfortune? But there is a remedy for all things when one's sweetheart is a Fleming of Rome.[1] Begin by putting this handkerchief on your head, and throw away that sword-belt. Wait for me in this alley. I will be back in two minutes.'

"She disappeared, but soon returned with a striped mantle that she had found I know not where. She made me take off my uniform and put on the mantle over my shirt, and thus equipped, with the handkerchief with which she had bandaged my wounded head, I resembled pretty fairly a Valencian peasant, of whom there are many in Seville who come to sell their orgeat of 'chufas.'[2] Carmen then conducted me to a house similar to Dorothea's, at the foot of a narrow lane, where she and another gipsy washed and dressed my wound better than any surgeon-major could have done; they then gave me a drink of I know not what, and at length placed me on a mattress, where I fell into a profound sleep.

"Probably these women had mingled in my potion some of the narcotic drugs of which they have the secret, for I did not awaken until very late the following day. I had a violent

[1] *Flamenca de Roma.* A slang term, designating gipsies. *Roma* does not mean the eternal city, but the nation of the *Romi* or *married people*, the name given themselves by gipsies. The first who were seen in Spain probably came from the Netherlands, whence their name of Flemings.

[2] A bulbous root, from which a tolerably pleasant beverage is made.

headache and a slight fever, and some time elapsed before the recollection of the terrible scene of the previous day recurred to me.

"After again dressing my wound, Carmen and her friend both squatted on their heels near my mattress and exchanged some words in 'chipe calli,' that seemed to be a medical consultation. Then both of them assured me that I should be cured in a short time, but that it was imperatively necessary to quit Seville as soon as possible; for if the authorities caught me, I should be shot without mercy.

"'My lad,' said Carmen, 'something must be done; now that the king will no longer furnish you with rice and salt codfish,[1] you must think of some way of earning a livelihood. You are too stupid to rob 'à pastesas,'[2] but you are active and strong. If you have the mettle, off with you to the coast and become a smuggler. Did I not promise to get you hanged? It is preferable to being shot. Moreover, if you have the wit to prosper, you will live like a prince so long as the 'miñons'[3] and the coast-guards do not seize you by the collar.'

"It was in this engaging fashion that this devil of a girl pointed out the fresh career for which she destined me; the only one, truth to say, remaining to me, now that I had incurred the death penalty. Shall I confess it, Señor? She convinced me without much difficulty. It seemed to me that I should be more intimately linked with her by this life of risk and rebellion; thenceforth I believed her love assured. I had often heard stories of smugglers who traversed Andalusia, mounted on a good horse, blunderbuss in hand, and their sweetheart seated behind them. Already I saw myself trotting in this fashion over hills and vales with the pretty little gipsy. When I told her of this fancy she laughed until the tears came into her

[1] The usual ration of the Spanish soldier.

[2] *Ustilar à pastesas*, to rob with skill, to pilfer without violence.

[3] A free corps.

eyes, and said there was nothing more delightful than a night in camp, when each couple retires to rest beneath the little tent formed of three hoops covered with a blanket.

"'If I cast my lot among the mountains,' I said, 'I shall be sure of you! There no lieutenant will share your love with me.'

"'Ah! you are jealous,' she replied. 'So much the worse for you. How can you be so stupid? Do you not see that I love you, since I have never asked you for money?'

"Whenever she spoke in this way I felt a desire to throttle her. To make my story short, Señor, Carmen procured for me a civilian's dress, in which I left Seville without being recognised. I went to Jerez, bearing a letter from Pastia to a dealer in aniseed, whose house was a rendezvous for smugglers. He presented me to a number of them, whose leader, nick-named the Dancaïre, received me into his band. We set out for Gaucin, where I found Carmen, who had promised to meet me there. She acted as our spy in our expeditions, and never was there a better one. She had just returned from Gibraltar, after arranging with the captain of a vessel for the shipment of some English merchandise, that we were to receive on the coast. We went to await it near Estepona; then having concealed a portion of it in the mountains, we proceeded to Ronda laden with the remainder. Carmen had already preceded us there, and it was she who indicated to us the moment at which we should enter the town. This first expedition and several succeeding ones were very lucky. The smuggler's life pleased me better than that of a soldier.

"I made Carmen presents. I had money and a mistress, and felt but little remorse. We were well received everywhere. My companions treated me well, and even showed me respect, for the reason that I had killed a man, there being some among them who could not boast of a similar exploit. But what conduced most to my content with my new life was the frequency with which I saw Carmen. She evinced more affection for me than ever; nevertheless, she would not acknowledge to our com-

rades her relations with me, and even made me swear every manner of oath to tell them nothing on that score. I was so weak, such wax in the hands of this creature, as to obey all her caprices. Then, too, it was the first time that she showed herself to me with the reserve and modesty of an honest woman, and I was simple enough to believe that she had really amended her former ways.

"Our band, numbering eight or ten men, rarely remained together, unless in some decisive contingency, and we were usually dispersed by twos and threes in the towns and villages. Each one pretended to have a trade : this one was a tinker, that one a horse-dealer, while I was a pedlar; but I seldom ventured to the more important places, because of my unfortunate affair at Seville. One day, or rather one night, our meeting place was just below Véger. The Dancaïre and I found ourselves there before the others. He seemed in high spirits.

"'We are about to have another comrade,' he said. 'Carmen has just played one of her best tricks: she has contrived the escape of her husband, who was in prison at Tarifa.'

"'What! her husband! is she then married?' I stammered out to the captain.

"'Yes, to Garcia, the One-eyed, a gipsy as crafty as herself. The poor fellow was in the galleys, but Carmen so cleverly netted the surgeon in her toils as to obtain the freedom of her husband. Ah! that girl is worth her weight in gold. She has been two years trying to effect his escape from prison, but there was no chance of success until official orders came to change the surgeon; with the new one, it seems, she quickly came to a good understanding.'

"You may imagine the satisfaction this news afforded me. I soon saw Garcia, who was truly the most hideous monster that gipsy ever engendered; black of skin, and still more black of soul, he was the most thorough scoundrel I have ever encountered. Carmen came with him, and when she called him

her husband in my presence, it was worth something to see the glances she gave me, and the grimaces she made when Garcia turned aside his head. I was indignant, and would not speak to her. The next morning we packed our bales, and were already on our journey when we perceived that a dozen troopers were in close pursuit. The Andalusian braggarts, who had previously spoken only of massacring every one, now wore a very pitiful air. There was a general flight. The Dancaïre, Garcia, a fine young fellow from Ecija, called the Remendado, and Carmen did not lose their wits, but the rest of the band abandoned the mules and plunged into the ravines, where the horses could not follow them. We could not retain our animals, so hurriedly loosened the best part of our booty, packed it on our shoulders, and tried to escape among the rocks by the steepest declivities. We threw the bales down before us, and followed them the best way we could, by sliding on our heels. All this while the enemy kept up their fire; it was the first time that I had ever heard the whistle of balls, but it seemed to me of small moment. When one is under the eye of a woman there is but little merit in mocking at death. We all escaped except the poor Remendado, who received a shot in the loins. I threw down my bundle and tried to carry him.

"'Fool!' shouted Garcia, 'what need have we of that carrion? Put an end to him, and do not lose the bale of cotton-hose.'

"'Throw him down! Throw him down!' cried out Carmen.

"Overpowering fatigue forced me to place him for a moment under the shelter of a rock, Garcia advanced, and discharged his blunderbuss full at the poor fellow's head.

"'It will take sharp eyes to recognise him now!' he exclaimed, looking at the face that twelve balls had torn to pieces.

"Such, Señor, was the fine life I led. In the evening we found ourselves in a thicket, exhausted, with nothing to eat, and ruined by the loss of our mules. And what did that infernal Garcia do? he drew a pack of cards from his pocket, and began

to play with the Dancaïre by the light of a fire that they kindled. I was lying on the grass, looking at the stars, thinking of the Remendado, and saying in my heart that I should very much like to be in his place. Carmen was sitting down near me, from time to time singing and clicking her castanets; then leaning towards me as if to whisper something in my ear, she kissed me two or three times almost in spite of myself.

" 'You are the devil,' I said to her.

" 'Yes,' she replied.

" After a few hours of repose she set off for Gaucin, and the next morning a little goatherd brought us some bread. We remained in the same spot all day, but at night we moved nearer to Gaucin, and then waited for news of Carmen. None, however, came. At daybreak we saw a muleteer guiding a well-dressed woman with a parasol, and a young girl who appeared to be her servant, each on a mule.

" 'Here are two mules and two women sent to us by Saint Nicholas, exclaimed Garcia. I should prefer four mules; but never mind, I must make them do.'

"Taking his blunderbuss, he moved towards the path, concealing himself in the brushwood. The Dancaïre and I followed him at a short distance, and when we were within reach of the expected booty, we showed ourselves, and called out to the muleteer to stop. The woman, on seeing us, instead of becoming terrified, for which our dress would have sufficed, burst into a loud laugh. 'Ah ! the fools,' exclaimed she, 'they mistake me for a real lady !'

" It was Carmen, but so well disguised that I should not have recognised her, had she spoken another language. She sprang off her mule, and talked for some time in a low voice with Garcia and the Dancaïre; then turning to me, she said : 'Canary, we shall see each other again before you are hanged. I am going to Gibraltar on business for the tribe. You will soon hear of me.'

" We separated after she had pointed out to us a place where we could find a safe retreat for some days. This girl was our

providence. We soon received some money from her, and certain information that was of still greater use to us: it was to the effect that on such and such a day, two English noblemen would set out from Gibraltar for Granada by a particular road. A word to the wise is sufficient. They had an abundance of golden guineas. Garcia wished to kill them, but this the Dancaïre and I opposed. We only took their money and watches, besides their shirts, of which we were in great need. Señor, one becomes a rascal unintentionally. A pretty girl drives a man out of his senses, he fights for her, an unlucky accident happens, he flies to the mountains, and from a smuggler becomes a robber before he has time to reflect. We came to the conclusion that the neighbourhood of Gibraltar would not be safe for us after the affair with the English lords, and we hid ourselves in the Ronda Sierra. You have spoken to me of José-Maria; it was there that I made his acquaintance. He was accompanied in his expeditions by his sweetheart, a pretty girl, discreet, modest, of good manners, never an unbecoming word, and such devotion! In return he made her very unhappy; he was always running after other pretty girls, he ill-treated her, and at times bethought himself of being jealous. Once he stabbed her with a knife. Well, she only loved him the more; women are so constituted, especially the Andalusians. This one was proud of the scar on her arm, and exhibited it as though it were the finest thing in the world. Then, into the bargain, José-Maria was the worst of comrades. On one of our expeditions he managed so well that all the profit fell to his share, while for us were reserved only the blows and the trouble.

"But to return to my story. We heard nothing more of Carmen. The Dancaïre said: 'One of us must go to Gibraltar to obtain news of her; she must have prepared some work for us. I would go myself, but I am too well known at Gibraltar.' The One-eyed said: 'I am also known: I have played too many tricks there on the Lobsters, and having but one eye I am not

easily disguised.' 'I must go then,' I said in my turn, enraptured at the mere thought of seeing Carmen again. 'Tell me what I am to do.' The Dancaïre replied: 'Arrange to go either by sea, or to pass through St. Roc as you may prefer, and on arriving at Gibraltar ask some one on the quay for the address of a chocolate vendor called the Rollona; when you find her she will tell you what is taking place there.'

"It was agreed that we should all three set out for the Gaucin Sierra, and that I should there leave my comrades and repair to Gibraltar as a fruit seller. At Ronda a man who was in our confidence procured a passport for me; at Gaucin they gave me a donkey, I loaded him with oranges and melons and began my journey. On arriving at Gibraltar, I found that the Rollona was well known there, but she was either dead or had gone to *finibus terræ*,[1] and her disappearance explained, in my opinion, how we had lost our means of corresponding with Carmen. I placed my donkey in a stable, aud taking my oranges in a basket, perambulated the town as if to sell them, but in reality with the hope of meeting some face known to me. The rabble which from every quarter of the world congregates in Gibraltar makes it a veritable Babel, for one cannot take ten steps without hearing as many different languages. I met several gipsies, but did not dare to trust them; I scrutinised them and they scrutinised me. We rightly guessed one another to be rascals, but the essential point was to know if we were of the same band.

"After passing two days in fruitless wandering I had learned nothing respecting Carmen nor the Rollona, and thought of returning to my comrades after making some purchases; when, on passing through a street at sunset, I heard a woman's voice calling, 'Orange man!' I raised my head and saw Carmen leaning out of a balcony with an officer in scarlet uniform, gold epaulettes, curly hair, and having altogether the appearance of a great English lord. As for Carmen, she was superbly dressed;

[1] To the galleys, or else to the deuce.

she wore a shawl thrown over her shoulders, a dress all of silk, and a gold comb. The saucy creature, always the same, was shaking with laughter. The Englishman, murdering Spanish, called to me to come up-stairs, as the lady wished for some oranges, and Carmen said to me in Basque: 'Come up, and be astonished at nothing.'

"Nothing, in truth, ought to have astonished me on her part. I cannot say whether I felt more joy than chagrin at meeting her. The door was opened by a tall, powdered, English servant, who conducted me to a magnificent salon. Carmen immediately said to me in Basque: 'You do not know me, you do not understand a word of Spanish.' Then turning to the Englishman: 'I told you so; I recognised him at once as a Basque: you will hear what a droll language it is. How foolish he looks, does he not? Like a cat surprised in a pantry.'

"'And you,' I said, in my own tongue, 'have the look of a shameless jade, and I am strongly inclined to slash your face in the very presence of your gallant!'

"'My gallant! Bless me! You have guessed that all alone? And you are jealous of this fool? You are even more of a simpleton than before our evenings in the Calle del Candilejo. Do you not see, idiot that you are, that I am at this moment serving the interests of our people, and in the most brilliant way? This house is mine, the Lobster's guineas will be mine; I lead him by the nose, and shall soon lead him whence he will never return.'

"'And I, if you again try to arrange the affairs of our people in this same way, will take good care that there shall be no renewal of it.'

"'Oh! indeed! Are you my husband, to command me? The One-eyed approves of my conduct, and what have you to say in the matter? Ought you not to be content in being the only one who can call himself my "minchorrò"?[1]

[1] My lover, or rather my caprice.

"'What does he say?' inquired the Englishman.

"'He says that he is thirsty and would like a draught of wine,' replied Carmen, throwing herself back on a sofa, and laughing immoderately at her translation.

"Señor, when that girl laughed it was impossible to resist her or to talk sense. Every one laughed with her. The Englishman began to laugh also, like the idiot that he was, and told the servant to fetch me some wine. While I was drinking, Carmen said: 'Do you see that ring on his finger? If you like I will give it to you.'

"'I would give my own finger to have your lord up in the mountain, each of us with a maquila in our hand.'

"'Maquila? What does that mean?' asked the Englishman.

"'Maquila,' replied Carmen, laughing, 'is an orange. Is it not a comical name for an orange? He says that he would like to make you taste a maquila.'

"'Yes?' said my lord. 'Well, bring some more maquila to-morrow.'

"While we were speaking the servant entered to say that dinner was served, and the Englishman rising, gave me a piastre and offered his arm to Carmen, as if she could not walk alone. Carmen still laughing said in our own tongue: 'My lad, I cannot invite you to dinner, but to-morrow, as soon as you hear the drum beat for parade, come here with your oranges. You will find a better-furnished room than the one in the Calle del Candilejo, and you will see if I am not still your Carmencita. Afterwards we will talk of the affairs of our people.'

"I did not reply, and was already in the street when the Englishman called out: 'Bring some maquila to-morrow,' and I heard Carmen's peals of laughter.

"I left the house, not knowing what I should do; I hardly slept, and in the morning found myself so angry with the traitress that I resolved to leave Gibraltar without seeing her again; but at the first roll of the drum all my courage forsook

me, I seized my basket of oranges and ran to Carmen. Her Venetian blind was half open, and I saw her large, black eyes watching for me. The powdered servant at once conducted me to her, she sent him off to execute some commission, and as soon as we were alone she threw herself into my arms. I had never seen her so beautiful. Adorned like a madonna, perfumed, surrounded by silk-covered furniture, embroidered curtains—Ah!—and I looking like a robber, as I was.

"'Minchorrò!' said Carmen, 'I have a mind to break everything here, to set fire to the house, and to fly to the Sierra.'

"And then there were tender caresses!—bursts of crocodile laughter. She danced, she tore up her furbelows; never did a monkey perform such antics, such gambols. When she again became serious: 'Listen,' she said; 'our interests are at stake. I intend him to conduct me to Ronda, where I have a sister who is a nun—' here fresh peals of laughter. 'We shall pass through a place of which I will notify you. You will attack him: strip him clean! The best thing would be to kill him, but,' she added, with a diabolical smile that she had at certain moments, and which no one had any desire to imitate, 'do you know what must be done? Let Garcia appear first; keep yourself a little in the rear, for the Lobster is brave and dexterous: he has good pistols. Do you understand?' She interrupted herself by a laugh that made me shudder.

"'No,' I replied; 'I hate Garcia, but he is my comrade. One day, perhaps, I may disembarrass you of him, but we will settle our score after the manner of my country. I am a gipsy only by chance, and in certain things I shall always remain a true Navarrese.'

"'You are a fool, a simpleton, a real "payllo." You are like the dwarf who thinks himself tall when he spits far. You do not love me. Go!'

"When she said, Go! I could not leave her. But I promised to return to my comrades and to wait for the Englishman, while

she, on her part, swore to feign illness up to the moment of leaving Gibraltar for Ronda. I remained two days longer at Gibraltar, and she had the audacity to come disguised to see me at my tavern. I left; *I* also had a project. I returned to our rendezvous knowing the place and hour at which the Englishman and Carmen were to pass. I found the Dancaïre and Garcia awaiting me. We passed the night in a wood by a fire of fir cones that made a marvellous blaze. I proposed to Garcia to play cards; he agreed, and at the second game I told him that he cheated. He began to laugh, and I threw the cards in his face. He stretched out his hand for his blunderbuss, but I put my foot on it, saying: 'It is said that you can handle a knife as well as the greatest bully in Malaga; will you try it against me?'

"The Dancaïre wished to separate us. I struck Garcia several blows with my fist; anger made him brave, he drew his knife, I unsheathed mine. We both told the Dancaïre to allow us a free field and fair play, and, seeing that there was no possibility of stopping us, he stood aside. Garcia was already bent double, like a cat ready to spring at a mouse. He held his hat in his left hand to parry, his knife in front, which is the Andalusian guard. I stood in Navarrese fashion, full in front of him: the left arm raised, the left leg advanced, the knife along the right thigh. I felt stronger than a giant. He darted at me like an arrow; I turned on my left foot, and he found nothing in front of him; but on the instant I plunged my knife into his throat, and it entered so far that my hand was beneath his chin. I turned the blade with such force that it broke. All was over. The knife came out of the wound with a gush of blood as thick as your arm. He fell with his face to the earth, stiff as a log.

"'What have you done?' said the Dancaïre.

"'Listen! We could not live together. I love Carmen, and I will share with no one. Besides, Garcia was a scoundrel, and

I remember the poor Remendado's fate. There are now but two of us, but we are good fellows. Come, will you have me for a friend, in life and death?'

"The Dancaïre held out his hand. He was a man about fifty years old. 'Out upon these love affairs!' he exclaimed. 'Had you asked him for Carmen, he would have sold her to you for a piastre. Now we are only two, how shall we manage to-morrow?'

"'Leave all to me,' I replied. 'Now I can laugh at all the world.'

"We buried Garcia, and moved our camp a couple of hundred paces away. The next day, Carmen and her Englishman appeared with two muleteers and a servant. I said to the Dancaïre: 'I will settle the Englishman. Do you frighten the others; they are not armed.'

"The Englishman was brave; if Carmen had not jogged his arm he would have killed me. In short, I regained Carmen that day, and my first word was to tell her that she was a widow. When she knew how it had all occurred, she said: 'You will always be a fool. Garcia ought to have killed you. Your Navarrese guard is all nonsense! He had overcome many good fellows more skilful than you. But I suppose his time had come. Yours, too, will come.'

"'Yours also, if you are not faithful to me,' I replied.

"'Well and good!' she rejoined; 'I have more than once seen in the coffee-dregs that we are to die together. Bah! As we sow we reap,' and she began to click her castanets, as she always did when wishing to drive away some troublesome thought.

"We forget ourselves when speaking of our own affairs. All these details weary you, no doubt, Señor, but I shall have soon finished.

"We continued to lead the same life for some time. Several comrades more trustworthy than our late associates joined us,

and we occupied ourselves in smuggling, and also, at times, it must be confessed, in stopping travellers on the highway, but only in the last extremity and when we could not do otherwise. Moreover, we did not maltreat our victims, and confined ourselves to taking their money. For some months I was satisfied with Carmen; she continued to be useful to us in our expeditions, putting us in the way of many successful ventures. She stopped either at Malaga, Cordova, or Granada, but at a word from me she left everything and came to meet me at some isolated inn, or even in camp.

"On one occasion only—it was at Malaga—Carmen gave me some uneasiness. I learnt that she had made the acquaintance of a rich merchant, with whom she probably proposed to renew the Gibraltar farce. Despite all that the Dancaïre could say to stop me, I set off for Malaga, entering it in broad day. I sought out Carmen, and carried her off at once. We had an explanation. 'Do you know,' she said, 'that since you have really been my master, I love you less than when you were only my lover. I will no longer be tormented, nor, above all, commanded. What I wish, is to be free and to do as I please. Beware of driving me out of patience! If you weary me, I will find some good fellow who will repay your ill-turn to Garcia in the same coin.'

"The Dancaïre reconciled us, but we had said things to each other that remained on our hearts, and we were no longer the same as before. Soon afterwards a disaster befell us. We were surprised by some soldiers; the Dancaïre was killed, as well as two other comrades, while two were made prisoners. As for myself, I was seriously wounded, and but for my good horse I, too, should have fallen into the soldiers' hands.

"With my only remaining companion I escaped to the woods, but worn out with fatigue, with a ball in my body, I fainted on alighting from my horse, and thought that I was about to die in the brushwood like a hare that has been shot. My comrade

carried me to a cave known to us, and then went in search of Carmen. She was at Granada, and immediately hastened to me. During a fortnight she never left me even for a moment; she did not once close her eyes; she nursed me too with a skill and devotion such as never woman before showed for the best loved of men.

"As soon as I was able to stand, she secretly conveyed me to Granada. The gipsies find safe asylums everywhere, and I passed more than six weeks in a house within two doors of the corregidor who was seeking me. Frequently, when looking from behind a window-shutter, I saw him pass by.

"At last I was restored to health, but I had reflected very seriously while on my sick-bed, and I contemplated a change in my mode of life. I spoke to Carmen of leaving Spain, and trying to live honestly in the New World. She laughed at me. 'We are not made for planting cabbages,' she said; 'our destiny is to live at the expense of others. Listen: I have made every arrangement with Nathan ben-Joseph, of Gibraltar, who has some bales of cotton cloth, that only await your assistance to be smuggled through. He knows that you are living, and relies on you. What would our correspondents at Gibraltar say, if you failed to keep your word?' I allowed myself to be persuaded, and resumed my villanous career.

"While I was concealed at Granada, some bull-fights took place, at which Carmen was present. On her return she frequently spoke of a very adroit picador named Lucas; she knew the name of his horse, and how much his embroidered jacket had cost. I paid no attention to this, but Juanito, the only comrade who was left me, told me a few days afterwards that he had seen Carmen with Lucas, in one of the shops on the Zacatin. This began to alarm me. I questioned Carmen as to when and why she had made the acquaintance of this picador. 'He is a lad with whom one can do a stroke of business,' she said; 'a noisy river has either water or pebbles. He has won

twelve hundred reals in the arena, and of two things one is to be chosen : either we must have his money, or else, as he is a good horseman and a strong, courageous fellow, we can enrol him in our band. Some of our comrades are dead, you need to replace them. Take him with you.'

" 'I want neither his money nor himself,' I replied hotly; 'and I forbid you to speak to him.'

" 'Take care,' she rejoined : 'when I am forbidden to do a thing, it is soon done !'

"Fortunately the picador took his departure for Malaga, and I set myself to smuggling in the Jew's cotton. I had plenty to do during that expedition, Carmen also, and I forgot about Lucas: perhaps she also forgot him, at least for the time. It was about then, Señor, that I met you, first near Montilla, then afterwards at Cordova. I will not speak of our last interview; you perhaps know more about it than I do. Carmen stole your watch; she also wanted your money, and especially the ring that I see on your finger, and which she declared to be a magic ring that it was very important for her to possess.

"We had a furious quarrel on the subject, and I struck her. She turned pale and wept. It was the first time that I had ever seen her weep, and it produced a terrible effect on me. I begged her pardon, but she was sulky an entire day, and when I set out for Montilla she would not kiss me. For three days my heart was full, when she suddenly joined me with a smiling face and as gay as a lark. All was forgotten, and for a while we were like lovers again. At the moment of parting she said to me: 'There is a fête at Cordova. I am going to see it : I shall find out the people who will be leaving there with money, and will let you know.' I allowed her to go; but when alone I began to think of this fête and of Carmen's change of humour. She must already have avenged herself, I reasoned, since she was the first to seek reconciliation.

"I heard from a peasant that bull fights were taking place

at Cordova. My blood began to boil, and like a madman I at once started off for there and went to the plaza. Lucas was pointed out to me, and seated on the bench against the barrier I recognised Carmen. It was sufficient to see her only one minute to be certain of the truth. With the first bull Lucas played the gallant, as I had foreseen. He snatched the cockade[1] from the animal and carried it to Carmen, who immediately fastened it in her hair. The bull became my avenger. Lucas was upset, his horse falling across his breast and the bull on the top of them both. I looked for Carmen; she was no longer in her place. It was impossible for me to make my way out of the crowd, and I was compelled to await the end of the spectacle; then I went to the house you know, and there I remained quietly all the evening and a part of the night. Towards two o'clock in the morning Carmen returned, and was a little surprised to see me. 'Come with me,' I said to her.

"'Very well! Let us go,' she replied.

"I brought my horse, and placed her on the saddle behind me, and we rode the rest of the night without exchanging a single word. At daybreak, we stopped at a lonely little inn, near a small hermitage. Then I said to Carmen: 'Listen! I forget everything, I will reproach you with nothing; but swear to me one thing: that you will follow me to America, and live there quietly with me.'

"'No,' she replied, in a sulky tone, 'I will not go to America. I find myself very well here.'

"'Is it because you are near Lucas? But consider, should he recover he will not live to make old bones. Yet, why should I blame him? I am tired of killing your lovers: it is *you* whom I will kill!'

[1] *La divisa*, a knot of ribbons, the colour of which indicates the pasture land whence the bulls come. This knot is fixed to the animal's hide by a little hook, and it is the height of gallantry to pluck it from the infuriated bull to offer it to a woman.

"She gazed steadfastly at me with her untamed look, and said: 'I have always thought that you would kill me. The first time I saw you, I had just met a priest at the door of my house; and to-night, on leaving Cordova, did you see nothing? A hare crossed the road between the legs of your horse. It is written!'

"'Carmencita, do you no longer love me?'

"She made no reply. She was seated on a rush mat with her legs crossed, tracing lines on the ground with her finger.

"'Let us change our way of life, Carmen,' I continued in a beseeching tone. 'Let us live in some place where we shall never be separated. You know that not far from here we have a hundred and twenty gold ounces buried under an oak; besides we have other money in the jew Ben-Joseph's care.'

"She began to smile, and answered: 'I first, you next! I know well enough that it will happen so.'

"'Once more reflect,' I resumed. 'I am at the end of my patience and my faith. Make up your mind, or I shall make up mine.'

"I left her, and went towards the hermitage, where I found the hermit praying. I waited till his prayer was ended; I should have been glad to pray myself, but I could not. When he rose from his knees I went to him, and said: 'Father, will you pray for some one who is in deadly peril?'

"'I pray for all the afflicted,' he replied.

"'Will you say a mass for a soul that is perhaps soon to appear before its creator?'

"'Yes,' he replied, looking fixedly at me; and as there was something strange in my manner, he wished to make me talk. 'It seems to me that I have seen you.'

"'When will you say the mass?' I asked, placing a piastre on a bench.

"'In half an hour. The son of the tavern-keeper below there is coming to assist. Tell me, young man, have you not

something on your conscience that distresses you! Will you listen to the counsels of a christian?'

"I felt ready to weep. I told him that I would return, and hastened away. I lay down on the grass until I heard the bell ring for mass, then I drew near; but I remained outside of the chapel. When the mass was over, I returned to the inn. I almost hoped to find that Carmen had fled. She could easily have taken my horse and escaped; but I still found her there. She was not willing to have it said that I could frighten her.

"During my absence she had unstitched the hem of her dress, from which she had taken out the lead, and was now seated before a table, looking intently at the metal which she had melted and thrown into an earthen bowl full of water. She was so absorbed in her sorcery as not to be aware at first of my return. Sometimes she took up a bit of the lead, and turned it on every side with a sad air: sometimes she sang with intense accent one of those magic songs in which Maria Padilla is invoked—the mistress of Don Pedro—who was, it is said, the *Bari Crallisa*, or the great queen of the gipsies.[1]

"'Carmen,' I once more said to her, 'will you come with me?'

"She rose, dashed the bowl to the ground, and placed her mantilla over her head as if ready to go. My horse was brought, she mounted behind and we rode off. After going some little distance I said: 'My Carmen, you are now willing to follow me, are you not?'

"'I follow you to death, yes; but I shall live with you no longer,' she replied. We were in a solitary ravine; I stopped

[1] Maria Padilla was accused of having bewitched the King Don Pedro. A popular tradition relates that she presented Queen Blanche of Bourbon with a golden girdle, that, to the king's eyes, bore the semblance of a living serpent. Thence came the aversion that he always manifested for the unfortunate princess.

my horse. 'Is it here?' she asked, and at a bound she was on the ground. She took off her mantilla, threw it at her feet, and stood motionless with one hand closed on her hip, looking steadily in my face. 'You intend to kill me,' she said, quietly, 'I see it clearly; it is written, but you cannot make me yield.'

"'I implore you, Carmen, be reasonable. Listen to me! All the past is forgotten. Nevertheless, and you know it, it is you who have brought me to ruin; it is for you that I have become a robber and a murderer. Carmen! my Carmen! Let me save you, and with you save myself!'

"'José, what you ask of me is impossible. I no longer love you, but you still love me, and for this you wish to kill me. I could easily tell you a falsehood, but I will not take the trouble. All is over between us. As my husband, you have the right to kill your wife; but Carmen must always be free. A gipsy she was born, a gipsy she must die.'

"'You love Lucas, then?'

"'Yes, I loved him as I did yourself, for a time; less perhaps than I loved you. Now, I no longer love anything, and I hate myself for ever having loved you.'

"I flung myself at her feet, I seized her hands and bathed them with my tears. I recalled to her all the moments of happiness that we had passed together: I offered to remain a brigand to please her. All, Señor, all! I offered her everything provided that she would love me still!

"'José,' she said, 'to love you still is impossible; live with you I will not.'

"I was roused to madness; I drew my knife, and even then wished that she would be frightened, and plead for mercy; but that woman was a demon. 'For the last time, Carmen,' I cried, 'will you remain with me?'

"'No! no! no!' she answered, stamping her foot, and drawing from her finger a ring that I had given her, she threw it into the brushwood.

"I stabbed her twice. It was Garcia's knife that I had taken after his death, having then broken my own. At the second blow she fell without even a sigh. I can still see her large black eyes as they looked fixedly in mine; then they became dim and slowly closed. For a full hour I remained overwhelmed near her dead body. Then I remembered that Carmen had often expressed a wish to be buried in a wood. I dug a grave with my knife, and laid her in it. I searched some time for her ring, and having found it at last, placed it, with a little cross, by her in the grave—perhaps I was wrong. I then mounted my horse, galloped to Cordova, and at the first guard-house made myself known. I said that I had killed Carmen, but would not say where her body rests.

"The hermit was a holy man; he prayed for her, he said a mass for the repose of her soul. Poor child! The guilt lies with the gipsies who trained her to this life."

SPAIN is one of the countries in which to-day are to be found the greater number of those nomads dispersed throughout Europe, and known under the name of Gipsies, Bohemians, Gitanos, Zigeuner, etc. The larger part dwell, or rather lead a wandering life in the provinces of the south and east, in Andalusia, in Estramadura in the kingdom of Murcia, and many are to be found in Catalonia. These last often cross into France, and are met with at all our fairs in the south. The men usually follow the trades of horse-dealers, horse-doctors, and mule-croppers, to which they add the calling of mending pots and pans and copper vessels, not to speak of smuggling and other illicit dealings. The women tell fortunes, beg, and sell all manner of drugs, harmless or otherwise. The physical characteristics of the gipsies are more easy to distinguish than to describe, and once having seen one, one would recognise an individual of this race among a thousand men of other nations. By physiognomy and expression especially, they stand apart from the people who dwell in the same country; their skin also is very swarthy, whence the name of "Calé," the blacks, by which they often designate themselves.[1] Their eyes, perceptibly oblique, well opened, and very black, are shaded by long, thick lashes. Their look can only be compared with that of a fallow-deer: audacity and timidity are equally expressed by their eyes, which reveal the character of the nation—crafty, bold, but, like Panurge, afraid of blows.

The men for the most part are tall, slender, and agile, and I

[1] The German gipsies, although understanding perfectly the word *Calé*, do not appear to like the appellation. They call themselves *Rommané tchavé*.

do not remember to have seen a single one overburdened with flesh. In Germany the gipsy women are often very pretty, but beauty is exceedingly rare among the gitanas of Spain. While young they may be considered pleasing, though plain-faced, but with maternity they become repulsive. The want of cleanliness in both sexes is incredible, and any one who has not seen the hair of a gipsy matron can with difficulty form an idea of it, even in recalling the roughest, most greasy and dusty mane. In some large Andalusian towns certain gipsy girls, more attractive than the others, bestow greater care on their persons, and these dance for money, dances greatly resembling those prohibited in our public carnival balls.

Mr. Barrow, an English missionary, the author of two very interesting works on the Spanish gipsies, whom he had undertaken to convert at the expense of the Bible Society, asserts that it is a thing unheard of for a gitana to have a love-affair with a man foreign to her race. There is, I think, much exaggeration in the praise he accords to their virtue. It is very certain, though, that the gitanas manifest an extraordinary devotion to their husbands; there is no danger, no privation, that they will not brave to help them in their need. One of the names that the gipsies give themselves—"Romé," or husbands—appears to attest the respect of the race for the marriage state. Generally, it may be said that their chief virtue is patriotism, if one may so term the fidelity shown in their relations with those of the same origin as themselves, their eagerness to help each other, the inviolable secresy they maintain in transactions that are at all compromising. But it may be said that similar honesty is observed in all mysterious associations, and in dealings without the pale of the law.

Some months ago I visited a band of gipsies established in the Vosges. In the hut of an old woman, the senior of her tribe, was a gipsy not related to her family, who had been attacked with mortal illness. This man had quitted an hospital.

where he was well nursed, to go and die among his compatriots. For thirteen weeks he had been bedridden in the hut of his hosts, and much better treated than the sons and sons-in-law who lived with them. There was a good bed of straw and moss, with tolerably white sheets, while the rest of the family, numbering thirteen persons, slept on planks three feet long. So much for their hospitality. The same woman, so humane to her guest, said to me in his presence: "'Singo, singo, homte hi mulo'—Shortly, shortly, he must die." After all, the life of these people is so wretched, that death has no terrors for them.

A remarkable trait in the gipsy character is their indifference on the subject of religion; not that they are sceptics or free-thinkers—far from it. They have made no profession of atheism, and the religion of the country they inhabit is theirs, until they wander elsewhere, when they change it for that of the nation amid which they may next dwell. The superstitions which, among untutored races, replace religious sentiments, are equally foreign to them. There cannot be much superstition among people who live chiefly on the credulity of others; nevertheless I have remarked, among the Spanish gipsies, a singular horror of touching a corpse; there are few of them who would consent for money to carry a dead body to the cemetery.

I have said that the greater number of the gipsy women engage in fortune-telling, in which they succeed very well; but a large source of profit to them is the sale of charms and love-philters. They not only deal in toads' feet, whereby to rivet fickle hearts, and loadstone powder which makes one's self beloved by the coldest, but when necessary they have recourse to incantations that force the devil to lend them his assistance. Notwithstanding their squalor and the sort of aversion that they inspire, the gipsies enjoy a certain consideration among unenlightened people, of which they are very vain. They feel themselves to be a superior race in intelligence, and cordially despise the nations that give them hospitality. "The gentiles

are so stupid," said a gipsy woman of the Vosges to me, "that there is no merit in tricking them. The other day a peasant-woman called to me in the street, and I enterod her house. Her stove was smoking, and she asked me for a charm to make it draw. First I made her give me a good bit of bacon, then I began to mutter some words in 'rommani.' 'You are a fool, I said; you were born a fool, and a fool you will die.' When near the door, I said to her in good German: 'The infallible remedy for preventing your stove from smoking, is not to make any fire in it.' And then I bolted."

The history of the gipsies is still a problem. It is known, indeed, that their first bands, by no means numerous, showed themselves in the east of Europe towards the beginning of the fifteenth century; but we can say neither whence they come, nor why they came to Europe; and, what is more extraordinary, we are ignorant how, in so short a time, they have managed to multiply so prodigiously in countries very remote from each other.

The gipsies themselves have preserved no tradition as to their origin, and if the greater number among them speak of Egypt as their primogenial country, it is that they have adopted a fable very anciently spread abroad respecting them. Most orientalists who have studied the gipsy language believe that they are originally from India. In fact, it appears that a large number of roots and many grammatical forms of "rommani" are found in idioms derived from Sanscrit; and one can well understand that in their extended peregrinations the gipsies have adopted many foreign words.

In all the rommani dialects one meets with a quantity of Greek words. At the present day they have nearly as many dialects as there exist hordes of their race separated from each other. They speak the language of the country they inhabit more easily than their own idiom, which they chiefly use for the purpose of speaking freely in the presence of strangers. The

original tongue has everywhere notably changed, although in different degrees, through contact with the more cultivated languages which these nomads have been constrained to use. German on the one hand, Spanish on the other, have so fundamentally modified the rommani, that it would be impossible for a gipsy of the Black Forest to converse with one of his Andalusian brethren, although the exchange of a few phrases would suffice to show that they both spoke a dialect derived from the same idiom. Some words of frequent use are common to all dialects; thus, in the vocabularies that I have seen, "pani," means water; "manro," bread; "mâs," meat; "lon," salt. The German dialect appears to be more pure than the Spanish, it having preserved a number of primitive grammatical forms. But the gitanos have adopted those of the Castillian.

Nevertheless, certain words are exceptions, which prove the former community of language. The preterites of the German dialect are formed by adding *ium* to the imperative that is always the root of the verb. The verbs in the Spanish "rommani" are all conjugated on the model of the Castillian verbs of the first conjugation. From the infinitive "jamar," to eat, should come "jamé," I have eaten; from "lillar," to take, "lillé," I have taken; but these old gipsies say, by way of exception, "jayon," "lillon." I do not know any other verbs that have preserved this ancient form.

While thus displaying my slender knowledge of the rommani tongue, I ought to notice some words of French slang that our thieves have borrowed from the gipsies. The "Mysteries of Paris" have taught good society that "chourin" means knife. It is pure rommani; "tchouri" is one of the words common to all gipsy dialects. M. Vidocq calls a horse "grès," which is again a gipsy word, "gras," "gre," "graste," "gris." Add to this the word "romanichel," which in Parisian slang denotes gipsies. It is the corruption of "rommané tchavé," gipsy lads. But an etymology of which I am proud is that of

"frimousse," countenance, face, a word that all schoolboys employed in my time. Observe, in the first place, that Oudin, in his curious dictionary of 1640, wrote "firlimouse." Now, "firla," "fila" in "rommani," means face, and "mui" has the same signification, being the "os" of the Latins. The combination "firla-mui" was immediately accepted by a gipsy purist, and I believe it to be consonant with the genius of the language.

The foregoing is quite sufficient to give to the readers of "CARMEN" a favourable estimate of my studies in rommani. I will conclude with this gipsy proverb that comes apropos: "En retudi panda nasti abela macha." Into the closed mouth no fly enters.

THE END.

